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# Pennsylvania ANGLER





# Straight Talk

## Remarks at Oath of Office Ceremony

I am greatly honored to have been selected as the eighth Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. The Commission is a great agency that I have respected and admired for over 25 years, and now I'm proud to say I'm a member of the Commission family.

I am looking forward to developing an outstanding relationship with all the Commissioners as we protect and manage the Commonwealth's aquatic resources, and as we work together to provide quality fishing and boating opportunities for the citizens of Pennsylvania and for our guests.

To accomplish our mission and reach our goals, everyone in the Commission must understand and embrace the same vision. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission has been recognized for having the top fisheries and boating programs in the nation. We must all strive to make the best even better. As the Executive Director, it is my priority to have everyone in the Commission committed to this vision.

The Commission's slogan is "Resource First." As we all know, to protect and enhance Pennsylvania's aquatic resources, we must first take care of the people who hold this responsibility—the 445 permanent and 165 seasonal employees and the thousands of volunteers who work for the Commission.

I firmly believe in providing needed training for all employees, as well as providing them with developmental and cross-training assignments.

I pledge to enhance agency communication and teamwork, and encourage employee input in the planning and decision-making process.

I strongly believe in empowering employees at the lowest possible level to accomplish our mission by providing them the necessary authority, resources, information and support.

Also, one of my priorities is to ensure that everything is done to continue to keep our employees accident-free.

I plan to work closely with the bureau directors to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of all our programs, construction and operation, and maintenance efforts. We will all constantly strive for excellence by being better managers of our resources—manpower, time and money.

The Commission will also try to establish cooperative education programs with various universities and colleges throughout the state.

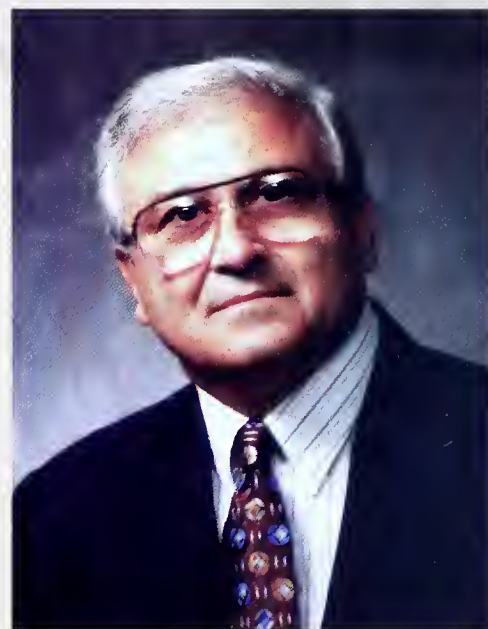
Making public facilities, programs and fishing sites accessible for the disabled will be an accelerated effort by everyone.

I look forward to meeting and working with the Governor's Office, members of the General Assembly, and the Game and Fisheries Committees of both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The Commission will continue its excellent partnerships with federal, state and local conservation agencies, as well as our state's fine sportsmen's organizations. We will continue to seek input and comments from all these groups as we finalize and implement our Strategic Plan through the year 2004.

For the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission to provide quality angling and boating opportunities and to protect and manage the Commonwealth's aquatic resources, we need everyone's cooperation and support.

*Peter A. Colangelo*



**Peter A. Colangelo**

*Executive Director*

*Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*

Peter A. Colangelo is the eighth executive director of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. He began with the Commission on October 3, 1994.

Pete Colangelo came to the Commission from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District. Before his retirement from federal service in September 1994, Pete served 34 years with the Corps, 20 of which he served as Chief of the Natural Resource Management Branch. His responsibilities included supervision of more than 150 permanent and 100 temporary employees; management of an \$18 million budget; supervision of 16 flood control dams in five states; and management of the Corps recreation and natural resources for 16 million recreational visits per year.

Mr. Colangelo has a degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Pittsburgh. He has completed all graduate credit requirements in Parks and Recreation at Slippery Rock University. He is also a registered Landscape Architect, a certified Professional Leisure in the National Recreation and Parks Association, and a Corps of Engineers federal officer. He is regional vice president and a past president of the National Water Safety Congress.

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January 1995 Vol. 64 No. 1

# Pennsylvania ANGLER

*The Keystone State's Official Fishing Magazine*

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PA GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

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*This issue's front cover shows Pennsylvania angler Jeri Bleech with a near-record walleye.*

## Responsiveness

I receive letters from *Angler* subscribers just about every day on every aspect of Commission activity. I answer some of these letters myself, I gather information from Commission staffers to answer mail, or I ask a Commission staff expert to reply, especially when someone asks technical questions.

The Commission employee who answers letters usually sends me a copy of the letter. You might be pleased to learn that over the years I have watched how diligently Commission employees respond to inquiries—how ardently and carefully our employees do their jobs, and how they put the same amount of care and consideration into responding to reader inquiries. Indeed, the Fish and Boat Commission is an agency of specialists, and I have repeatedly seen examples of Commission employees providing special attention, and in many cases, individual attention, to license-buyers, boat registrants, conservationists and other interested parties.

I know these observations might seem downright propagandist because I'm hardly a casual observer. Nevertheless, I've watched these things for nearly 13 years, and I thought you should know.—*Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.*





# Ice Fishing ESSENTIALS

## *for Catching Panfish*

by Mike Bleech

Two bluegills and a crappie flopping at my feet on the ice would have normally made me happy for a half-hour of ice fishing had it not been for another angler 20 yards away who had been catching fish as fast as he could get his jig into the water. Was it location? Was he doing something special? I had to know.

It was a cold day. Bundled up as we were, I did not recognize that very successful ice fisherman. Luckily he recognized me.

"Mike!" he said just loudly enough for me to hear. He had to repeat it before it registered that someone was talking to me. "Mike! Over here."

I looked him in the eyes and realized who it was. He was pointing to a hole right next to the one he was using, inviting me to join him. I did, and immediately began catching crappies and slab bluegills as quickly as he was.

That was a simple case of location. Most ice anglers fail to realize how critical this point is. Panfish behave about the same under the ice as they do in open water. Yellow perch tend to roam and spread out. But sunfish tend to remain very close to cover. It is not at all unusual to catch sunfish after sunfish from a hole while at the same time not catch a thing through a hole just three feet away. Let that sink in!





Sunfish can be found close to clumps of weeds, sunken brush, manmade structure, stumps and anything that provides them with concealment from predators.

In dense weed beds look for sunfish or perch along the edges of openings in the weeds. Perch, though they spread out when they are plentiful, will be concentrated over certain structures when they are not plentiful. Location is not critical when perch are moving. But again, when they are not moving, you have to find them. Look for them on humps or in sunken creek channels.

Only when they are very aggressive do panfish move up or down far to get a meal. Expect to have to put your lure right in front of their noses.

Though panfish behave about the same in winter as in summer, this does not mean panfish behave in exactly the same manner all the time. By this I mean that their range of behavior is about the same in summer and winter. Sometimes they are roaming in search of food. Sometimes they are holding in one location, but they will take a meal if it comes along. Sometimes you can look through the hole and see them, but they show no interest in anything you offer.

At those times when panfish are roaming in search of food, the fishing is very good. Location is not important, within reason. Catching them requires no great wealth of knowledge. However, many anglers miss out on a lot of good fishing because they assume that the panfish are not hitting when sloppy tactics do not get the job done. This applies not just to location, but also to tackle and the way it is used.

### Gear down for panfish

Panfish are wonderful fish for beginners or for casual anglers because catching them does not require a lot of specialized tackle. Still, using the right tackle can make a big improvement in results. Basically, gearing for panfish means scaling the tackle to the relatively diminutive quarry.

Line and lures are the most important considerations. Line diameter is not very important to perch, but to crappies and bluegills it can make all the difference in the world. Some of the things that panfish eat have about the same diameter as 10-pound-test fishing line. Is it any wonder, then, that they are wary of line? Some of the best panfish anglers I know use nothing larger than premium 2-pound-test line. A couple use "invisible" sewing thread.

At the very least you should carry fine-diameter line to use as leader material. This way you do not need to change line with the seasons, or get a fishing outfit just for panfish. But I suspect that as you become more serious about panfish you will get a special ice fishing rod. This can be done without a great deal of expense.

### Rods

The perfect outfit for panfishing through the ice begins with a light graphite rod, for my taste no more than three feet long—graphite because feel can be very important. An ice fishing rod should be equipped with some sort of device to stand it on the ice, something to take the place of a forked stick. I make my own rod stands by taping a couple of coat hanger wire legs just forward of the rod handle.

As long as the temperature is not too low, not below the mid-20s, an ultralight spinning reel works fine. Spinning reels do not like extremely cold weather. They jam, get tight and do not spool line well. Reels are not important for panfishing through the ice, though, unless you fish in deep water. Sometimes perch, especially, are quite deep. I have caught perch 60 feet beneath the ice at Kinzua.



photo-Mike Bleech

I do not have much trouble fishing without gloves when the temperature is in the high 20s, or above, as long as the wind is not blowing, and as long as I can keep my hands dry. If you would rather wear gloves, then rod sensitivity is not at all important.

Tiny bobbers are the standard of sensitivity for ice fishing. You don't have to feel anything—just watch the bobber. Of course, nothing is flawless, especially during winter. You have to keep moving the bobber periodically to prevent it from getting ice-locked. Some specialty ice fishing bobbers are squeezable, so you can easily break off ice.

Spring bobbers are another way to gain sensitivity. These are spring wires or flat springs attached to the end of ice rods. The slightest tug on the lure bends them. The weight of the jig causes some bend in a spring bobber, so if a panfish takes the jig upward the spring bobber straightens.

Some ice anglers complain that spring bobbers detract from hook-setting efficiency. Actually, I have found the opposite to be true. This is likely because I take great care to sharpen my hooks.

### Lures

You can have a lot of fun with ice fishing lures because almost all of them work. We anglers obviously like to collect and show off our assortments of ice jigs. These collections are even justified, to some extent.

For most ice panfishing situations you can do just fine using only one lure. That lure could be a leadhead jig, a jigging spoon or a teardrop jig. Its color would be silver or gold in combination with yellow, orange or chartreuse in the case of jigging spoons or teardrop jigs, or any of the latter three colors combined with a red leadhead.



# Ice Fishing ESSENTIALS for Catching Panfish

Always tip the jig with bait or scent. Sure, sometimes you can catch panfish with an unflavored jig. A baited jig is better, nonetheless. Maggots or other small grubs are universal jig-tippers. Minnows or pieces of minnows might be better at times for crappies and perch.

When you get right down to it, you could be a pretty nifty ice angler using just a 79-cent teardrop jig, the tip section of a broken rod, and 10 cents worth of monofilament line. You can collect your own grubs, though they are inexpensive at bait shops.

That single lure can probably catch perch, or crappies, or bluegills and pumpkinseeds whenever they are feeding. And on many occasions it will be the best lure. But not always. That is when the collection of lures comes in handy. Panfish can be fussy.

## Coax or wait?

It is a real pleasure to watch a master at work. Ice fishing had been pretty slow all through the afternoon. Eight anglers, two groups from my hometown who had met by coincidence on Presque Isle Bay off the Perry Monument, had accumulated 14 yellow perch. Meanwhile, a solitary angler a hundred yards to the east was doing much better.

He was huddled between two rods. Each rod, primitive-looking tools he had obviously made himself, rested in a bulky holder that he had also made. The butt ends of the rods rested on a wire that was attached to a sheet metal flag. Wind gusts waved the flag from side to side, slightly lifting and lowering the rod butts. This did not move the jigs he used more than a couple of inches, but what results!

Once we realized what was happening, we tried to imitate his minute jigging action. Immediately our results changed for the better.

But that was just then. Sometimes it is best not to move the lure or bait at all. Sometimes a more aggressive jigging motion is best.

Panfish eat insects, zooplankton and small fish. Zooplankton barely moves. Insects generally travel in a series of short stop-and-go movements. Small fish can swim quite fast. So

it makes sense that these various kinds of movement appear to panfish at some time or another.

Note that "always" does not apply to many things in fishing. Versatility is one of the most important traits for anglers.

Often as not, the best way to present a baited jig to panfish is to still-fish it, almost. While basically still-fishing, tap the rod tip every now and then just to get the attention of any fish that might be passing by.

ANGLER

## Finer Points

- Panfish might use the entire water column, from the bottom to the ice. Yellow perch are more apt to be close to the bottom. Crappies and other sunfish frequently suspend, especially late in the ice fishing season when the ice is melting. It is as if they were trying to get closer to the surface to feel the warmth of the sun.

Try fishing close to the bottom at first. Find the bottom and set your line so that the lure is within a foot of the bottom. But do not be too patient, at least not for a while. If you get no takers close to the bottom, slowly work the lure toward the ice. If you catch a fish, do not reel it in. Bring it in hand over hand so you can measure the depth at which the fish struck.

- When bluegills or pumpkinseeds are the quarry, use a very small teardrop jig tipped with a maggot. These smaller sunfish feed primarily on insects and zooplankton. Hold the rod in your hand. Trying to hold it still will move it just right.

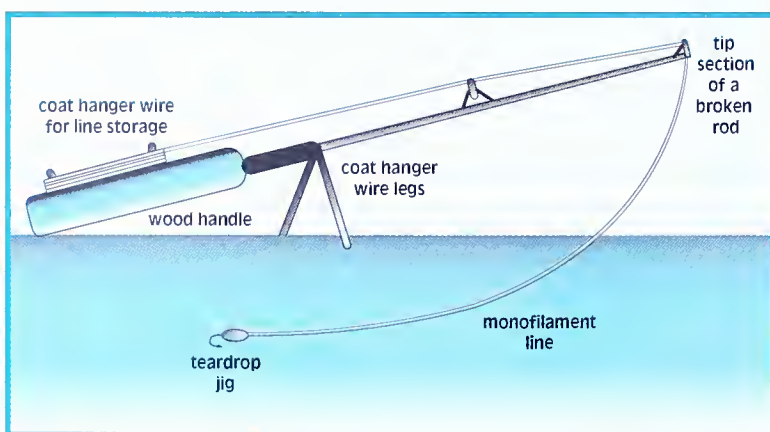
- Larger crappies feed heavily on minnows. Try small jigging spoons tipped with minnows. Move the jig frequently, though just a few inches at a time. Vary the depth constantly until a pattern is established.

- Yellow perch are the least fussy of these panfish. If you are not catching them, the problem is probably not the lure but the location. They are usually on the bottom, so do not waste time checking higher in the water column.

- One of the interesting things about panfishing through ice is that you can look through the same hole you are fishing through and if the water is shallow enough and clear enough you can observe the fish in action. What a great education! (Hint: Cover your head and the hole with a jacket or tarp to block out sunlight and you can see under the ice much better.)

- If you are ice fishing in a dense weed bed, instead of drilling several holes attempting to find an opening in the weeds, drill one hole and make an opening using a long-handled rake. You might be surprised how quickly panfish move into the new opening.

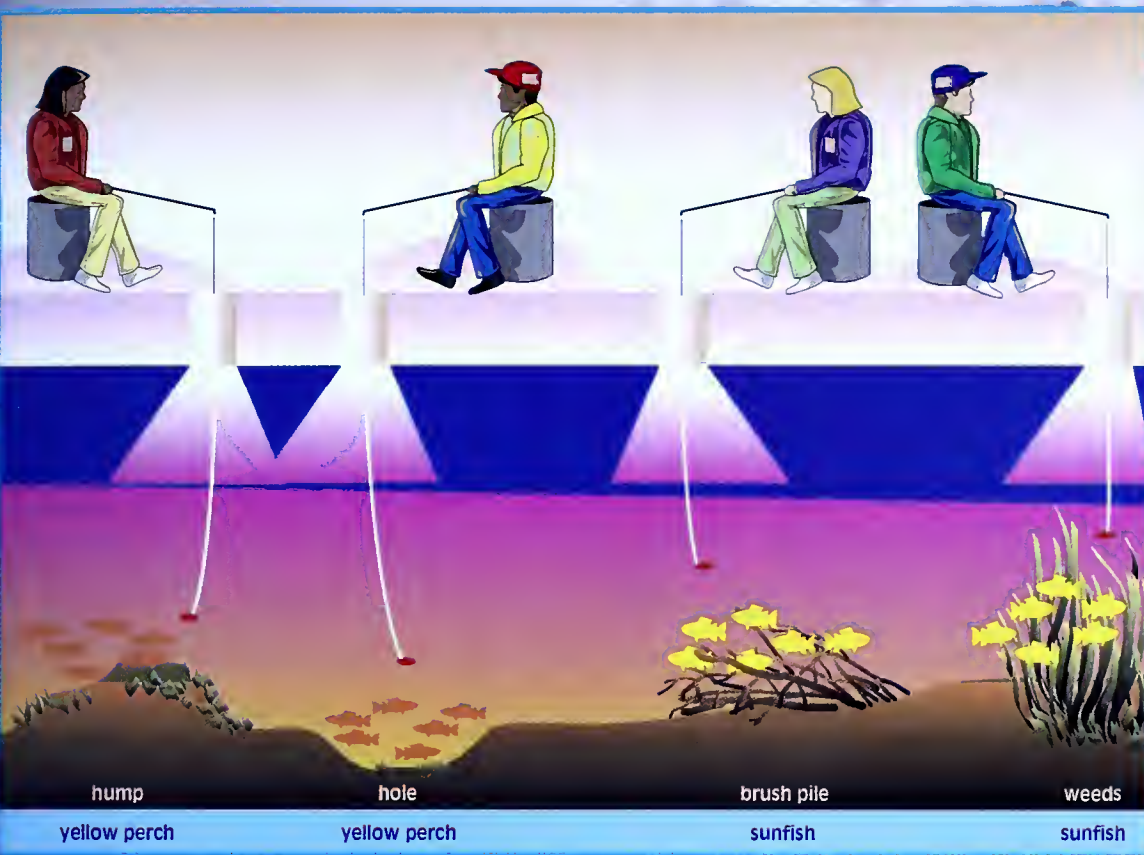
- Cater to your comfort. A small stove is a great addition to your ice fishing gear. You can even make a stove with a metal bucket or large can, using charcoal for fuel. Warming your fingers whenever they get cold is comforting and downright cozy. You can also heat hot chocolate or a meal on the stove. This is fishing in style!—MB.



***You can make a fine ice rod using wood doweling, the tip section of a broken rod, an inexpensive teardrop jig, coat hanger wire, electrical tape, and a few cents worth of monofilament fishing line.***



*Sometimes location is critical when ice fishing for panfish. Three feet might make a lot of difference.*



*Panfish often suspend well above the bottom in relation to their food, or for other reasons. This a major factor when fishing for crappies late in the ice fishing season.*





# The Changing Face of our Fishing License



by Linda L. Steiner

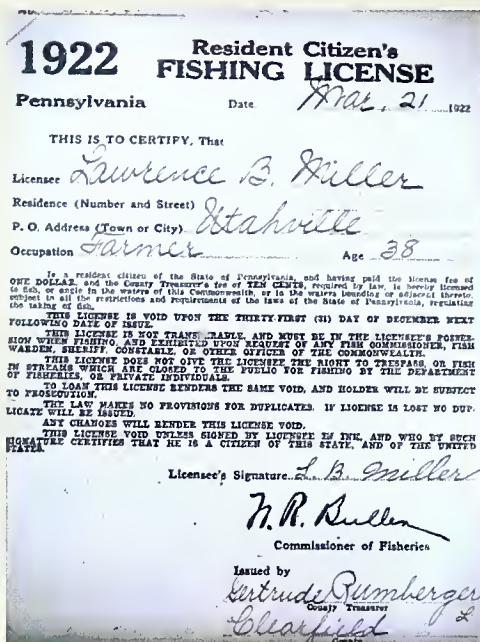
Fishing licenses are the embodiment of a privilege, an empowerment to have a great day of sport on the state's waters. Perhaps because they represent a larger and more vital concept, the OK to fish, licenses are mostly overlooked as objects. But in the more than 70-year history of the Pennsylvania fishing license, what anglers have carried, worn and pinned on themselves has changed greatly. Few know that as well as Cloyd Hollen.

Hollen is a law enforcement veteran of the Pennsylvania Fish Commission. He retired from the position of assistant supervisor of the Northwest Region before "and Boat" was added to the agency's name. He has only to glance at his wall to see the continuing evolution of our state license. Hollen has a complete collection framed in a keystone-shaped case, and it all began with a chance find.

Talk about treasures in the attic! Hollen was going through some effects of his late father-in-law, Lawrence Miller, when he found an old Forest and Waters envelope. Intriguingly, the envelope rattled and Hollen opened it. Inside he found nearly mint editions from the first years of licensing.

Hollen kept up the collection avidly since then—he'd had such a good start—supplementing his find with his own licenses and others. Today he is a source of information on the changing face of the Pennsylvania fishing license.

"The first license the state ever issued was in 1922," says Hollen, "which my father-in-law purchased." The premier resident license cost the angler \$1.00, with county treasurers getting an additional 10-cent fee for handling the issuance. For comparison, today's basic resident fishing license costs \$12.00, or a dozen times more than originally. Issuing agents now receive a 50-cent fee, five times more than they did at first. Of course, back in the early



1920s, a person could fill his pockets on a penny's worth of candy.

The form of the first license is worth examining a bit longer, to see how much the permits have changed and how they've stayed the same in seven decades. The first license was on white paper with black ink. It was stamped with a red individual number, and did not have to be displayed. But it had to be "in the licensee's possession when fishing, and exhibited upon request of any fish commissioner, fish warden, sheriff, constable, or other officer of the commonwealth." You didn't have to wear it, but you needed to keep it about you, in case you were asked for it.

Like today, the 1922 license was good for the calendar year. But a lot more information about where you could fish was included on the document. Having read and signed the form, there was no pleading ignorance. The licensee was allowed to fish or angle "in the waters of this Commonwealth, or in the waters bounding or adjacent thereto," in compliance with the state laws relating to fish.

The license warns that it "does not give the licensee the right to trespass or fish in streams closed to the public for fishing by the department of fisheries or private individuals." No provisions were made for duplicates (you had to spend another dollar for a new one if you lost it). Licenses weren't transferable. Loaning the license was liable for prosecution, and making changes on the license rendered it void. In other words, no hanky-panky with the permit—same as nowadays. Although this first license didn't include, as today's does, a description of the person, it did want to know his/her occupation. Lawrence Miller said he was a "Farmer" from "Utahville" (Clearfield County).

## Buttons

The paper-only permit lasted just one year. The very next year, as can be seen by Hollen's collection, the Fish Commission began its





SMALLMOUTH BASS

**1987**

THIS SIDE MUST BE DISPLAYED  
EXPIRES 12/31/87

WALLEYE

NO REFUNDS  
I certify that I am a resident  
of Pennsylvania

**1988**

COHO SALMON

THIS SIDE MUST BE DISPLAYED  
EXPIRES 12/31/88

**1989**

THIS SIDE MUST BE DISPLAYED  
EXPIRES 12/31/89

NO REFUNDS

**1990**

THIS SIDE MUST BE DISPLAYED  
EXPIRES 12/31/90

NO REFUNDS

1991 Pennsylvania \$5

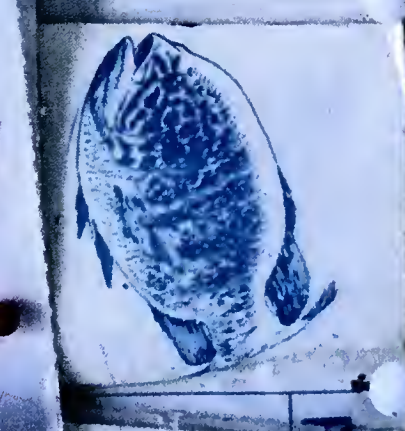
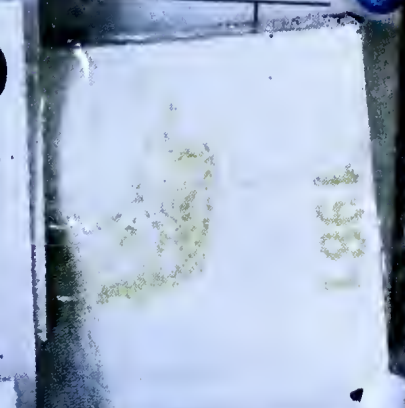
Trout/Salmon Permit

No 004394

1992 Pennsylvania \$5

**1992**

Pennsylvania Fish Commission



1963

PENNSYLVANIA  
RESIDENT  
FISHING LICENSE  
SUMMARY for  
Season, Bag Limits.

87923

1964

PENNSYLVANIA  
RESIDENT  
FISHING LICENSE  
SUMMARY for  
Season, Bag Limits.

118537

1965

PENNSYLVANIA  
RESIDENT  
FISHING LICENSE  
SUMMARY for  
Season, Bag Limits.

97519

FEE \$5.00

1966

PENNSYLVANIA  
RESIDENT  
FISHING LICENSE  
SUMMARY for  
Season, Bag Limits.

9518

FEE \$5.00

1967

PENNSYLVANIA  
RESIDENT  
FISHING LICENSE  
SUMMARY for  
Season, Bag Limits.

69611

FEE \$5.00

1968

PENNSYLVANIA  
RESIDENT  
FISHING LICENSE  
SUMMARY for  
Season, Bag Limits.

335009

FEE \$5.00

1969

PENNSYLVANIA  
RESIDENT  
FISHING LICENSE  
SUMMARY for  
Season, Bag Limits.

01549

FEE \$5.00

1970

PENNSYLVANIA  
RESIDENT  
FISHING LICENSE  
SUMMARY for  
Season, Bag Limits.

740301

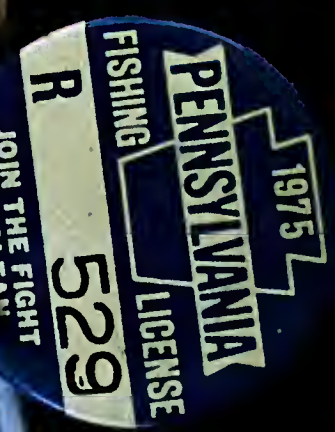
FEE \$5.00

1971

PENNSYLVANIA  
RESIDENT  
FISHING LICENSE  
SUMMARY for  
Season, Bag Limits.

207501

FEE \$5.00





# The Changing Face of our Fishing License

run of license buttons. These brightly colored metal buttons are the most durable and attractive chapter of Pennsylvania fishing license history.

From 1923 through unbroken decades, while the world experienced the Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression, World War II, the Baby Boom and the Cold War, the Pennsylvania fishing

anglers still had to carry and produce on demand a paper certificate, it was now printed on both

sides and smaller in form than 1922's.

From 1923 to 1959, what colorful buttons Pennsylvania sportsmen wore! The badges seemed to beg to be saved and collected. There was red, white and green in 1924; red, white and blue in 1925; red and white in 1926. From 1927 to 1931 the buttons were gold, blue, pink, orange and silver. After that the colors began to repeat or were seen in different parts of the button design. Attractive effects were produced by two-color printing, and when the white base was allowed to show through, the buttons became a rich three-tone design.

The year 1946 was a "radical" departure for the pin, at least to any angler who compared the 1945 button with the new one. The 1946 button, a simple dark-blue and white, has the word "Pennsylvania" in an arc above the keystone, not within it as before. The words "Resident Citizen's Fishing License" appear in the keystone now. The year is split "19" and "46" on either side of the keystone, with the licensee's number below on a banner. Curving along either edge are what appear to be classic, stylized flowers or leaves, like a victor's wreath. Of course, these buttons were produced the year following the Allies' success in World War II.

In 1947, the fishing license button went back to its original design, business as usual, as the now-peaceful nation did the same. In 1948, a new color appeared, maroon, and in 1949 the buttons became fancy again—bright-yellow and white, with what look like sun rays on the lower half.

Twice again the buttons had added pizzazz, in 1952 and 1954. The red and white button and the later green and white button had check-board backgrounds, a very "Fifties" look that



Cloyd Hollen



license button remained virtually unchanged. Well, there were a few minor modifications along the way, but mostly just in color.

From the first, license buttons were dated. The size was immediately settled: a 1 3/4-inch diameter circle. There was a pin on the back so it could be displayed, worn on an outer garment as required. The design was basic, with the state's signature keystone as the centerpiece. The 1923 license was in Pennsylvania's "team colors"—a yellow edge; an inner circle, banner and printing in blue; and the keystone in white.

During this period, the button was only half of the permit to fish. Although



recalled the style of the time and hot rods, drive-ins and poodle skirts. Although 37 years had passed, the last button in the series, the orange and white 1959, was nearly identical to the first one, except in color.

But what had happened to the license paper? Not much except where it was carried. The wording was virtually unchanged. Hollen's collection shows that beginning in 1927, the buttons were made with an opening in the back, into which an angler could insert a folded certificate. The button was a license holder. This continued through 1941, when solid-back buttons were substituted.

If an angler were checked for his license repeatedly, all that unfolding could ruin it, not to mention dunking and downpours. Hollen was fortunate to find his father-in-law's certificates in near-perfect condition in their buttons. The buttons, through 1947, carried the union label of "Local #1, Amalgamated Lithographers of America."

The license button succumbed to fiscal concerns in 1960, remembers Hollen. It simply cost too much to continue to make them. "This was done as part of Operation Bootstrap," he recalls, which "tried to get the Commission back on its feet again financially." Although there was no button issued in 1960, the license document was printed without change, so it still read "button must be displayed."

In 1960 license buyers were met by just a piece of pink paper, "and we had to buy a plastic holder to wear it in," says Hollen. The art of the Pennsylvania fishing license, except for changing its color—a succession of pastels—was lost for 14 years. Then in 1974, the license button was revived at the request of sportsmen.

But the button had shrunk in size, to about 1 1/2 inches in diameter. The new button was red and white, and unlike the old sturdy ones, was formed of a piece of thin metal with a pin set in the curved back edge. "It was flimsy," says Hollen. "People were always having trouble with it coming apart." On the face, elements of the original design were there but the keystone was small and restricted to the upper half. Instead of saying merely "Resident Citizen's Fishing License," the lower portion now admonished anglers to "Join the Fight for Clean Water."

The 1975 aqua-blue and white license button more closely resembled the popular old-style badge. It regained the quarter-inch it had lost and had a double back and a more substantial pin. As for the license paper, although it was more than 50 years since the first version was printed, the 1975 version was remarkably similar. But in keeping with the times, the "fish wardens" who could check licenses had been redesignated "waterways patrolmen."

License certificates by then contained a provision for obtaining a duplicate, in case of loss. But if the button part were gone, the permit told the unlucky angler "a facsimile may be made." This no doubt tested the artistry (or lack of artistry) of the license buyers unfortunate enough to misplace their buttons.

Although the 1975 button was a nostalgic return to the "good ol' days," it cost the Commission over \$100,000 to produce, says Hollen. This was way too much for an agency that had better and more resource-important things to do with its money. So with the nation's bicentennial coming up, the form of Pennsylvania's fishing license changed again.

## Paper license

The sole 1976 license was paper again, but this time a stiffer, more lasting material. In honor of the 200th birthday of the

United States and Pennsylvania's role in its founding, the front of the license showed a large blue liberty bell in a white circle, surrounded by red lettering. This time the caption underneath suggested anglers "Celebrate — Go Fishing." The picture side of the license was to be patriotically displayed. This marked the first time that artwork was used on a paper license.

Since 1977, printed line art has graced the licenses. Peeking through the clear plastic of the holder, the permit is now a wearable piece of wildlife art. The subject of the drawings changes each year, as well as the ink color. The first of the series, 1977, was a static-looking blue crappie, but since then it's been mostly fish in motion, like the musky skulking along the bottom (1979), trout jumping for flies (1980 and 1985), and a feisty smallmouth busting skyward (1986). Only one year showed the fish as catch—bass spilling out of a wicker creel in 1983. Many of the drawings were by Ted Walke, the Commission's art director.

## Trout/Salmon Permit

In 1991, Pennsylvania joined the states that issue special stamps for particular outdoor sports, in this case, a "Trout/Salmon Permit." Although line art still graces the basic license, participating anglers must paste the signed "trout stamp" across the drawing and so lose it to view. What they have gained, though, is a miniature reproduction of full-color fine art by some of the country's top wildlife artists.

As was fitting, the state fish, the brook trout, was chosen as the subject for the first Pennsylvania trout stamp, painted by Mark Susinno. Anglers in 1992 wore a reproduction of Ed Totten's brown trout; 1993 was Roger Cruwys's rainbow; 1994 was Pennsylvanian Robert Kray's brook trout. All paintings were also released as limited edition prints and sold popularly. In 1995, a steelhead will be pictured on the stamp.

The look of the license will change again in 1996, when a glance at the trout stamp will take anglers on an armchair vacation. That year, the stamp will depict a Pennsylvania trout stream, and the Commission is holding a contest to pick the winning painting. The subject can be one of 25 selected waters from across the state. The judging will be held in late May 1995, and the winner's artwork will grace the stamp on nearly 750,000 trout anglers' licenses the next year.

Revenue to fund Commission programs and protect the resource has always depended on license sales. Although no one likes the price to go up on anything, Pennsylvania fishing licenses have increased modestly since the "dollar bargain" in 1922. Hollen's collection shows this. By 1938 a license cost \$1.50; by 1954 it was \$2.50; \$3.25 in 1958; in 1965 an even five bucks. In 1974, the "button revival" year, the license was upped to \$7.50. In 1980 the cost increased to \$9.00. It was way back in 1983 that the license went to \$12.00, and in 1991 the trout/salmon stamp was added at \$5.00.

In 1983, a "penalty box" was added, Hollen points out. On the front of the license numbers from 1 to 10 appeared for "Official Use Only." Conservation officers are the officials who use the box, and they circle a number that corresponds to a Commission code for particular violation(s) the license holder committed.

In 1993 the license was updated again, but it took an observant eye to see it. The change noted a new name and recognized the scope of responsibilities of the issuing agency. Inside the keystone symbol, an unfailling constant of the state's fishing license design since the beginning, and overtopping the brook trout and the ship's wheel was printed "Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission."





# *On the Water*

with Art Michaels

## **Becoming Fishing Partners**

There is a process used in India by which white natural-fiber clothing is dyed yellow. Each day the item is soaked in water and sun-dried. Slowly, over a long period, it turns yellow. Of course, you wouldn't notice the difference from one day to the next, but after some time, what was white becomes yellow.

My son and I became fishing partners in a similar way. Many years ago, when my son was just over two years old, I took him fishing for the first time. He caught his first fish at Memorial Lake, Lebanon County—a bluegill. I raved about it, photographed the catch, and praised him lavishly. His bewildered half-smile showed that he wasn't sure what all the excitement meant, but I think he sensed it must have been a good thing.

***During those seasons we fell into a comfortable routine. I carried the rods. He took the bait and tackle box. I lugged my camera gear. He held the net. A medium McDonald's vanilla milkshake for him on the way home. Large coffee for me.***

During the next few seasons, we caught hundreds of bluegills at Conewago Lake, Pinchot State Park. I owned a 14-foot aluminum boat then, and after a season or two, my son demanded to row. I patiently encouraged him, and gradually his splashing, unpredictable strokes became silent and rhythmic. Moving in disjointed arcs became smooth, straight-line courses.

Years later the Snoopy rod, with which he began, remained hanging on our rod rack. After a season or two it became shrouded in a coating of dust. My son had graduated to the kind of tackle I used most often—spinning gear. That season he resisted my help to bait his hooks and cast. During the next few seasons his casts put our terminal tackle in trees and riverbank bushes. But over a surprisingly and thankfully short period, most of his casts reached the water. Now the memory of those “expensive,” unsettling seasons has faded. Come to think of it, these days just as many of my casts end up in the trees as his.

Early during this period he had hooked a carp of about 20 pounds. After a 15-minute battle, I sloshed through the shallows of the Susquehanna, chasing the brute with a net amid rocks

and roots and branches. I came THIS close to netting the thing, but at my feet in inches of water it threw the hook at the last moment and slithered slowly into deep water. My son cried and pouted all the way home. Somehow I managed a smile during this ordeal. Don't fishing partners let big ones get away from each other at least once? Won't this mishap be a story he tells his grandchildren?

Later during this period he caught his first hefty smallmouth in the Juniata. That season he also began unhooking and releasing his fish by himself, and tying his own knots.

During those seasons we fell into a comfortable routine. I carried the rods. He took the bait and tackle box. I lugged my camera gear. He held the net. A medium McDonald's vanilla milkshake for him on the way home. Large coffee for me.

One April, just before our first trip of the season, we were checking our PFDs. That day we discovered we could wear the same size PFD.

The next year during one trip he shouted, “Got one!” as he did many times before. But I hesitated a moment, hearing his new, booming baritone voice. That summer I taught him to shave.

I realized that someday he might want to take his girlfriend along, and then his wife and children, as I did when my father took me fishing over the years. I also admitted reluctantly that there might be years during which he wouldn't want to go with me—turbulent, rebellious times, during which he'd look in all the wrong places to “find himself.” But if my son were like me, I knew that those years would pass, and that part of “finding himself” would mean eagerly inviting me on fishing trips.

It seems like a long time ago I took him fishing that first time. But over the years there was no ceremony, no notice in the mail, no formal announcement, and no symphonic *ta-da*. I don't remember the specific season or fishing trip. But I do know we became fishing partners.

ANGLER

***The next year during one trip he shouted, “Got one!” as he did many times before. But I hesitated a moment, hearing his new, booming baritone voice. That summer I taught him to shave.***



# The Brown Drake

by Chauncy K. Lively  
photos by the author

It has been aptly said that the most predictable aspect of fly fishing is its unpredictability. I've always believed that this facet of the sport contributes to its charm, and although it may at times be maddening, it always prevents boredom. One of my personal foibles is taking a friend to a favorite stream, unfamiliar to him, and enroute, describing precisely what we'll find concerning hatches and the kind of fishing we'll encounter. Rarely have I predicted with significant accuracy, but generally my friends are kind enough to overlook my faulty forecasts.

A few years ago I had a banner day in May on a favorite stretch of stream. I knew sulphurs had been appearing sporadically, and I prepared myself accordingly. When I began fishing in mid-afternoon, the duns had not yet appeared and I bent on a sulphur nymph, anticipating pre-emergent activity by the natural nymphs. The nymph worked like a charm. Then, when duns began to appear, I switched to the dry fly pattern and response was immediate. Trout after trout tipped up for the little dry and I began to think I could do no wrong. You know the feeling. When the showing of duns slowed, I took a break, replaced my tippet and tied on a spinner pattern.

In the evening clouds of spinners began to appear against the sky, and eventually the females made their descent, characteristically, with abdomens curved downward and egg sacs visible. Soon soft rings appeared on the surface and I found myself tangling with several of the day's best browns.

It was all over shortly before dark, but it had been a day to remember. This was textbook angling, when theory became practical and nature's chronologies actually occurred as scheduled. I planned a return visit quickly, and a few days later I was back, but this time at a big pool downstream where I knew several browns resided.

Flushed with my recent success, I had planned every detail in advance. Today I would forego fishing the sulphur nymph and instead wait until the trout began to rise for the duns. That way, hopefully, the rises would reveal the largest trout and



these would be my quarry. I thought that if I randomly fished the nymph, I'd chance hooking a small trout whose commotion might spook the rest.

Thus prepared, I stood hip-deep in the big pool, rod resting in the crook of my arm, and waited for the game to begin. The wait was longer than expected and I remember glancing at my watch a couple of times. But finally the duns began to show, and before long an almost continuous parade of sulphurs drifted by—appearing like tiny sailboats—and many floated the length of the pool before lifting off. It was a gourmet's feast for hungry trout. But where were the trout? Untold numbers of flies floated over the pool's most promising runs, and yet, not a trout rose, not even a small one.

After a lengthy period of nothingness I began to get a queasy feeling in the pit of my stomach. Had some kind of catastrophe suddenly wiped out the trout? Two hours later, after the hatch ended and the spinner fall had come and gone without event, I became convinced the worst had happened.

Puzzled and disappointed, it was nearly dark and I was ready to head for home. Suddenly the pool erupted with a fury that was almost scary. All around were explosions, as if mortar shells were landing in the water. It took a moment to calm down, and then I realized what was happening. The brown drake was making its first appearance of the year and the trout were responding with frenzied enthusiasm. I grabbed one fly box, then another before I remembered that the box with my brown drake patterns was on a shelf in my den at home. I had become so trans-

fixed with the sulphurs that other possibilities eluded me.

With no time to fret, I tied on a size 10 Adams. The trout snubbed it. Then I tried a Wulff pattern with the same result. After a succession of abortive attempts with other patterns, I was willing to concede that when the trout are keyed on the brown drake a "near 'nuff" pattern just won't cut the mustard.

I have had many wonderful days of brown drake fishing since that calamitous day in 1985, but never again have I found the trout responding so noisily. Why they spurned that day is a mystery. Had they anticipated the brown drakes and refused to settle for less?

*Ephemera simulans*, the brown drake, is a handsome mayfly—not quite as large as the green drake but a substantial mouthful nonetheless. There has been great confusion about this fly among Pennsylvania fly fishers. First, the large *Hexagenia recurvata* is called "brown drake" by a few anglers. Secondly, in the mid-1970s, a widely read book of entomology/fly fishing was published, which stated that *E. simulans* did not exist in Pennsylvania or other northeastern states in quantities sufficient to qualify as important hatches. A number of eyebrows were raised by this statement (mine included).

I remember fishing to the green drake hatch on lower Spruce Creek in the early 1950s and finding the brown drake intermixed in a ratio of about 1:4. Invariably, the trout would pick off the browns in preference to the larger and more numerous greens. Some years later Mark Volk sent me some *simulans* specimens he had collected on Neshannock Creek in Mercer County, where he enjoyed excellent fishing to the hatch. Not too many years ago the Pittsburgh Fly Fishers Club had a weekend outing in May on Slate Run, and a number of members wound up fishing Pine Creek to a spectacular brown drake hatch.

My favorite brown drake pattern follows the Tri-Point style of dressing we have described previously on these pages. It is easy to tie and requires little maintenance when things get busy. After each fish, just squeeze out the moisture between folds of your bandanna and it's ready to go again. That's a boon when the hatch comes off late, in poor light.





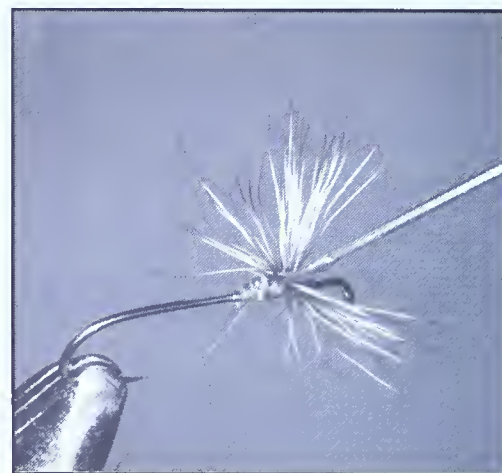
# The Brown Drake



**1** To prevent bending the hook shank under heavy pressure, seat the bend in the rear of the vise jaws, exposing about two-thirds of the shank. Tie in the thread 1/8-inch behind the eye. Cut a bunch of hair and firmly bind it on the shank for an effective wing length equal to the shank length. Trim the excess hair butts.



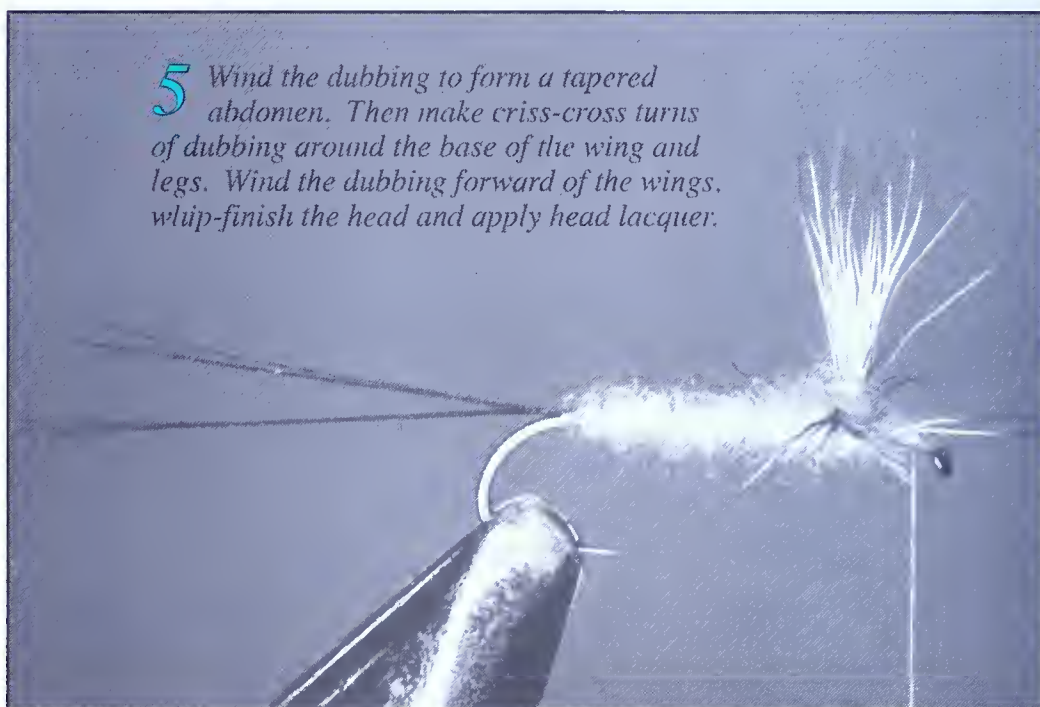
**2** Release the hook from the vise and reset it in the normal position. Separate the hair into three parts with criss-cross turns so that a bunch extends out each side and the middle bunch stands upright.



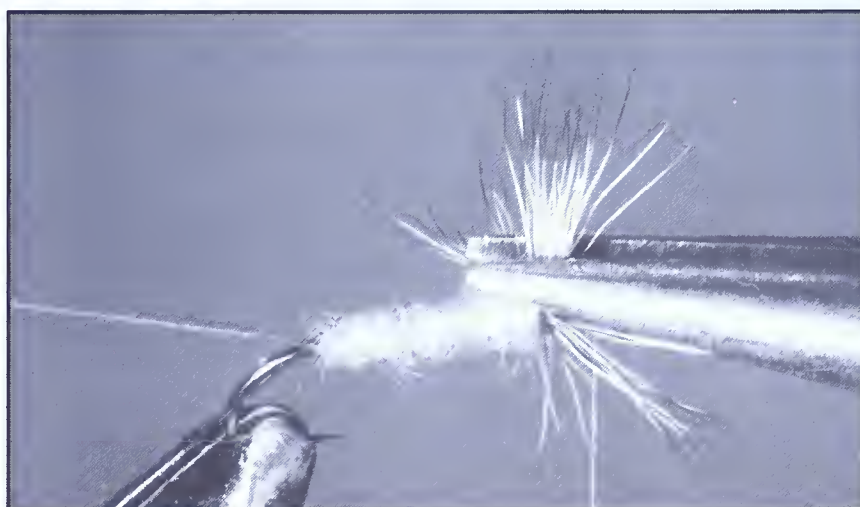
**3** Apply a generous drop of Flexament to the base of the legs and wing base.



**4** Wind the thread back to the bend and tie in the microfibers for tails. Separate the microfibers into two split pairs and wind between to set the angle. Wax a length of thread and apply dubbing.



**5** Wind the dubbing to form a tapered abdomen. Then make criss-cross turns of dubbing around the base of the wing and legs. Wind the dubbing forward of the wings, whip-finish the head and apply head lacquer.



**6** With tweezers or fine-pointed pliers, flatten the hair at the base of the legs and wing.

## Dressing:

### Tri-Point Brown Drake

**Hook:** Size 12, 2XL  
(Mustad 94831 or Tiemco 5212).

**Thread:** Brown 6/0 prewaxed.

**Wings/legs:** Fine natural deer hair.

**Tails:** Four dark-brown microfibers, paired.

**Body dubbing:** Medium amber-tan fur or synthetic.



# RECORDS

## WAITING TO BE CAUGHT

by Mike Bleech

There is a little record angler in most of us, and a lot of it in some of us. Even if catching a record fish is not a driving ambition, who would not be thrilled to catch one? If the thought crosses your mind, if you would not mind putting yourself in the right place to do it, or if it is a serious goal, here is the hottest information about catching what could be a Pennsylvania state record fish.

How likely is it that you will catch a state record fish? Statistically the chances are remote. The Commission currently maintains records for 32 fishes. Four new records were established during 1993, making each about a one-in-a-quarter-million catch, considering the number of anglers in the state. The odds become astronomically remote if we consider the number of days people fished.

However, you can improve the odds tremendously. Clearly the most important thing for record anglers to know is which waters probably hold record size fish. Narrowing down the hundreds of waterways in Pennsylvania to just a few can mean you have the potential of catching a state record any time your hook is in the water.

Record fish sometimes show up in strange places, yet we can virtually rule out many waterways, though we might be wrong. If that sounds wishy-washy, it accurately portrays the situation. This is not an exact science.

Sometimes things happen to create unusual situations, like the one that produced the current state record 17-pound, 14.5-ounce brown trout. The Raystown Branch of the Juniata River has some fair trout fishing, but it is hardly the place you would expect to find such a huge brown trout. Unless, that is, heavy discharge from Raystown Lake carried some big trout from the lake, through the dam, into the tailwaters where the record was caught.

Making that kind of catch requires some degree of luck. But an alert angler can get into the right place at the right time.

Nonetheless, your best chance for getting on the record list probably is to fish at one of the following waters.

### Muskellunge

Because our oldest state record is the muskellunge, we will begin with it. The record was set in 1924 at Conneaut Lake by Lewis Walker, Jr., of Meadville. Rumors of huge Conneaut

## PENNSYLVANIA'S RECORD MUSKELLUNGE

WEIGHT  
54 lbs.



LENGTH  
59 in.

EARLY ON THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 30, 1924 LOUIS WALKER JR. OF MEADVILLE, PA. WENT MUSKY FISHING ON CONNEAUT LAKE, NEVER REALIZING

THAT HE WOULD CATCH A FISH WHICH HOLDS THE STATE RECORD TO THIS DAY. READ "LOU'S" OWN STORY IN THE MAY '72 ISSUE OF PENNSYLVANIA ANGLER MAGAZINE.

**The most important key to catching a state record is knowing which waters probably hold record-size fish.**



Lake muskies persist, but the likelihood of beating that 54-pound, 3-ounce mark is remote.

"That lake gets a lot of fishing pressure," says Commission Area 2 Fisheries Manager (AFM) Ron Lee. "I don't think it has that kind of potential anymore."

Lee thinks a more likely place to find a record musky is the sprawling Allegheny Reservoir. Every year it gives up muskies weighing over 40 pounds. Corps of Engineers biologist Bob Hoskin caught and released three huge muskies last spring in his annual netting survey.

Other waters with long-shot potential are Lake Erie, Presque Isle Bay and the Susquehanna River. A 45-pound musky was reported last year from the Susquehanna in Luzerne County.

### Largemouth bass

The list of waters that might hold record largemouth bass is difficult to narrow down. Even though Lake Arthur has been producing more big largemouths during recent years than any other waterway in the state, a new record is just as likely to come from some obscure pond.

The current record, 11 pounds, 3 ounces, was caught during 1983 at Birch Run Reservoir, a 53-acre puddle in Adams County. Forty-acre North Lake gave up the previous record in 1982, and 391-acre Springton Reservoir set the record a year before.

Harveys Lake and Lake Winola have shown 9-pound to 10-pound largemouths recently in biological surveys.

### Smallmouth bass

Pennsylvania is best known for its river smallmouth bass fishing. But Lake Erie has the current state record: 7 pounds, 10 ounces.

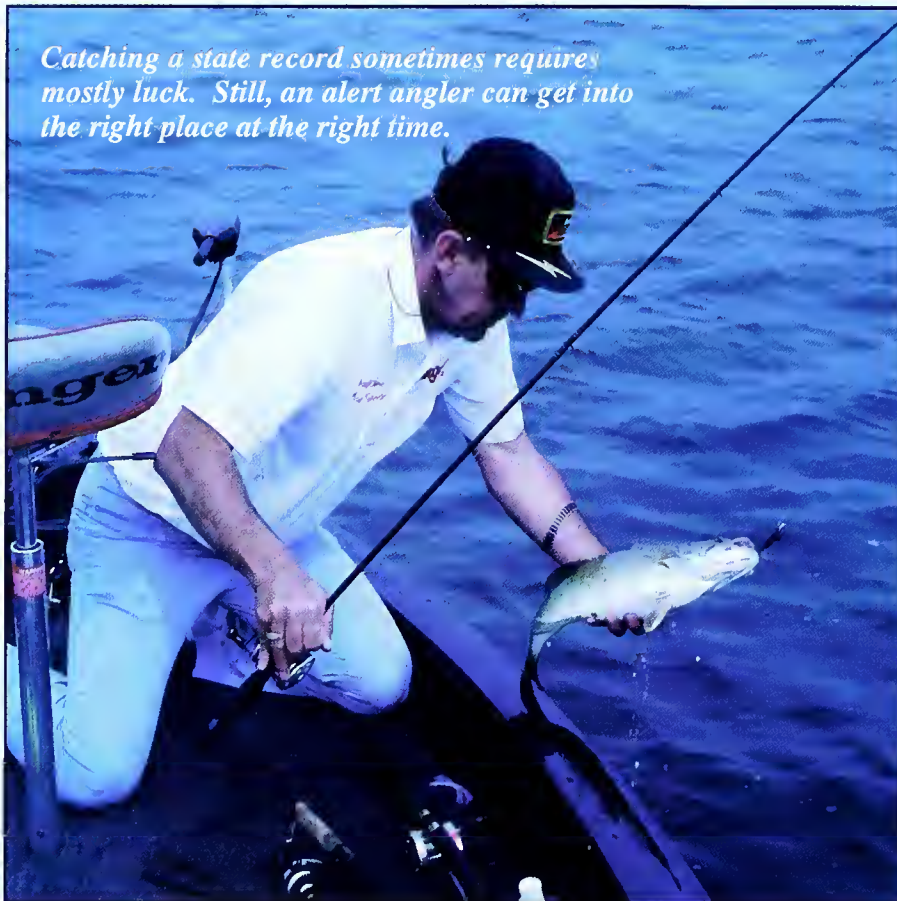
According to Commission Area 1 Fisheries Manager Craig Billingsley, it is "very likely" that another record will be caught from Lake Erie. Chances of the new smallmouth record being caught anywhere else are slim. The Allegheny River between Franklin and Emlenton might be a sleeper, though.

### Brook trout

Brook trout, our state fish, are barely recognizable as the fish that is native to our streams. Even though we do have countless miles of native brook trout streams, the brookies that inhabit these streams are not the same brook trout that would interest record-seekers.

All the brook trout records caught in the past several years have been hatchery releases. The next state record will almost certainly be another recent resident of a fish culture station. Any of our streams or lakes that is stocked with brook trout might hold the next record.

*Catching a state record sometimes requires mostly luck. Still, an alert angler can get into the right place at the right time.*



### Rainbow trout

Rainbow trout are more fragile than our other trout. For our purposes that vague phrase means there are not many waters that are likely to hold record rainbows. However, there is a chance that one of our larger reservoirs will grow a rainbow bigger than the 15-pound, 6.25-ounce record from Jordan Creek, in Lehigh County, or perhaps the Delaware or Allegheny rivers.

Steelhead are nothing more than rainbow trout that live in Lake Erie, as far as the Pennsylvania records go. This is the only place where they live in the state, so all

records will be caught there, or in tributary creeks.

The steelhead fishery has been the biggest success among the salmonids planted at Lake Erie. New records seem probable. The current record was caught during 1992—19 pounds, 2 ounces.

Palomino trout are another rainbow trout variation. Probably Lake Erie, where the current 11-pound, 10-ounce record was caught, is the most likely place for one of these stocked trout to survive long enough to beat that record. Palominos are not available in great enough numbers to be pursued seriously for record consideration.

### Brown trout

The heaviest documented brown trout caught in Pennsylvania is not the 17-pound, 14.5-ounce fish that currently holds the state record, but a 24-pound bruiser caught from Lake Wallenpaupack in 1967. This large Pocono reservoir also gave up the 17-pound, 3/4-ounce record that stood from 1988 through 1993. Because of its rich forage base and favorable habitat, I say flatly that Lake Wallenpaupack is the best trophy brown trout water in the state.

Raystown Lake might also grow the next record for the same reasons. The current record that was caught from the Raystown Branch undoubtedly was swept through the dam.

A few other waters might produce a brown in the high teens. The Allegheny Reservoir, East Branch Lake, and Laurel Run Reservoir might be sleepers, but a brown from Wallenpaupack or Raystown exceeding 20 pounds will eventually set the record.

### Lake trout

Crystal Lake, in Lackawanna County, produced the 24-pound lake trout that has held the state record since 1952. It is our third oldest record fish.

Improved deep-water fishing methods will probably keep lake trout populations trimmed too much to grow new records at any of our inland lakes. However, the lake trout fishery has improved considerably at Lake Erie. A new record could be established there anytime. The only factor holding it back is that



few anglers pursue lake trout.

## Salmon

Pennsylvania now lists four salmon species as records—landlocked Atlantic, chinook, coho and pink. Lake Erie is the only place in the state where the latter three can be found.

Pennsylvania has all but given up on chinook salmon because of poor returns. New York continues to stock them into Lake Erie, so the possibility of eclipsing the current 28-pound, 15-ounce record still exists.

Coho salmon are having problems throughout the Great Lakes. Currently low forage fish populations do not bode well for big salmon. The 15-pound, 5-ounce record is not in jeopardy.

Pink salmon were just added to the list of gamefishes for which the Fish and Boat Commission keeps records, so a record is imminent. It will probably have been established by the time you read this. Lake Erie grows relatively large pink salmon, compared to the other Great Lakes. I have seen 6-pounders.

Obviously pinks are a good focus for anglers who desire the distinction of holding a state record. Their population varies considerably from one year to the next, so check the latest fishing reports from the Erie area.

Landlocked Atlantic salmon were introduced to the state records list to with a 10-pound, 14.5-ounce fish caught in 1993 from Raystown Lake. These great gamefish have been stocked in relatively small numbers at Raystown, the Allegheny Reservoir and Harveys Lake.

## Striped bass

The Fish and Boat Commission separates our striped bass record into two categories—marine and landlocked lake. The marine record, set in 1989, is 53 pounds, 13 ounces. The landlocked record is 53 pounds, 12 ounces.

The marine record might well fall this spring in the Delaware River. Striper populations are recovering along the Atlantic Coast, and relief of the pollution block at Philadelphia lets them up the Delaware.

"The best time to catch a record striper is before the season in the month of March, particularly late March," says Commission Area 6 Fisheries Manager Mike Kaufmann. "The month of March is the window—anywhere from the Philadelphia airport to the state line is the best place."

Stripers have been the highlight of the Raystown Lake fishery for several years. Several times the landlocked striper record has fallen there, most recently by a 50 1/2-pound fish in 1993.

"We're beginning to push the capability of that species,"



*If there is another pike record, it will probably come from the Allegheny Reservoir.*

says Commission Area 7 Fisheries Manager Larry Jackson.

Stripers and hybrid stripers have been stocked at several other waterways in the state. However, hybrids do not grow as large as purebred stripers, and no other water has proven to provide the same quality habitat as Raystown for pure stripers.

## Walleyes

The Allegheny Reservoir clearly has been the trophy walleye hotspot in Pennsylvania since the mid-1970s. This 12,000-acre lake surrendered the current record, 17 pounds, 9 ounces, in 1980. That record has been approached many times, within 2 ounces just a couple of winters ago. A New York state record

walleye was also recently pulled from this lake.

Even though Lake Erie produces far more big walleyes than any other water in the state, none has approached record class. If a new record walleye comes from anywhere other than the Allegheny Reservoir, it will probably be from the Allegheny River, or one of its larger tributaries. A couple of other possibilities are the upper Delaware and Susquehanna rivers.

"I've seen a photo in a local paper of a walleye that supposedly weighed 18 pounds," says Commission Area 4 Fisheries Manager Robert Moase.

Saugers, a smaller cousin of walleyes, have recently expanded in the lower Allegheny River and the Ohio River. The 3-pound, 15-ounce record could fall anytime. This species might be a good target for anyone who wants a state record fish.

## Northern pike

The 33 1/2-pound northern pike state record might stand for some time. Caught in 1980 from the Allegheny Reservoir, it is another league from what is generally regarded as big pike by Keystone State standards.

If there is another record pike, it will probably come from the Allegheny Reservoir. This is the only water in the state where anglers have consistently caught big pike. Glendale Lake or Presque Isle Bay might have a chance of growing one this big.

## American shad

Though efforts are being made to re-establish American shad runs in the Susquehanna and Lehigh rivers, any new record will come from the Delaware River, where the current 9-pound, 9-ounce record was caught.

"Every year there is probably a record shad in the Delaware River," says AFM Kaufmann.



# RECORDS

## WAITING TO BE CAUGHT

### Catfish

The Fish and Boat Commission keeps records for channel catfish and flathead catfish, and lumps all bullheads into one category.

Channel cats are the most popular among this family of whiskered fishes. The current record, 35 pounds, 2.5 ounces, was caught in 1991 from the Lehigh Canal. That fish, according to AFM Michael Kaufmann, was stocked into that water as a record fish for a fishing contest.

Native only to the western third of the state, they have done well where they have been stocked. New records might be set at several places such as the lower Allegheny River, Shenango Lake and Lake Arthur.

Flatheads of record proportions most likely will come from the Allegheny downriver from Tionesta. The 43-pound, 9-ounce record was caught in 1985 from the Allegheny River in Allegheny County. These big catfish occupy such a small niche in the state that record hunters can narrow their search to a few deep, rocky pools in the Allegheny.

You are on your own in search of a state record bullhead. The 4-pound, 4-ounce record is a whopper. But a bigger one might be in your local fishing hole.

### Sunfish

Crappies, which have become the glamor sunfish, are lumped together by the Commission in record-keeping, though black and white crappies are different species. A few other states also do this. Our current record, 4 pounds, 1 ounce, was caught in 1991 from Auburn Dam, Schuylkill County.

Potential record crappie waters suggested by AFMs are Lake Ontelaunee, Lake Nockamixon and Blue Marsh Lake.

A 2-pound, 9-ounce bluegill is huge. Keystone Lake has held that record since 1983, and might hold it a while longer. You might look at Lake Marburg.

The only other sunfish record kept by the Commission is rock bass. It is 3 pounds, 2 ounces, caught from Elk Creek, Erie County. The chances of catching a new record rock bass are quite good at Elk Creek and around the wharves in Presque Isle Bay.

### Other fishes

White bass have not been popular in this state for various reasons, but their popularity is increasing. The current record, 3 pounds, 12 ounces, was caught during 1990 from Conneaut Lake. However, larger white bass have been filleted by anglers at the Allegheny Reservoir each of the past several years. Hardly anyone tries to catch them, yet this might be the best oppor-

*Waterways where a record-sized crappie might be found include Lake Ontelaunee, Lake Nockamixon and Blue Marsh Lake.*



tunity in the state to get into the records. Some other waters that might hold records are Conneaut Lake and Shenango Lake.

"It wouldn't surprise me to see the sheephead (freshwater drum) record broken at Lake Erie," says AFM Craig Billingsley. "The habitat up there is changing. The sheephead may have an advantage. They may eat zebra mussels."

A new freshwater drum record was set last year by a 19-pound, 14-ounce fish from the Monongahela River, taking the record away from a Beaver River drum. Records are very possible anywhere in the Three Rivers area, including the lower portions of major tributaries.

For a yellow perch bigger than 2 pounds, 8 ounces try Lake Marburg, East Branch Lake or Lake Erie.

"There is a potential for a state record chain pickerel out of Lake Nockamixon," AFM Kaufmann says.

Of course, there is a lot more to catching a state record fish

than being in the right place—like being there at the right time, using the right fishing methods, and luck. Probably luck should be repeated many times. But now at least you know where to go, and by reading *Pennsylvania Angler* you can learn when and how.

ANGLER

## Were the Record Fish Caught in the Good Old Days?

Among the 30 state-record fish currently listed, nine have been caught during the 1990s. Because the pink salmon record has yet to be established, it also will be a '90s record. Fifteen records were set during the 1980s, two during the 1970s, one each during the 1960s and '50s. The chain pickerel record dates from 1937. We go all the way back to 1924 for the muskellunge record. This state-record musky is displayed at the Commission's Linesville Fish Culture Station, Crawford County.—MB.



photo-PFBC archive, top photo-Mike Blech





# 8 Top Tailwaters

*by Charles R. Meck*

The water near the bottom of any fairly deep dam remains much cooler during the summer months than water near the top. It's not uncommon to see water temperatures in the high 50s and low 60s on many of these tailwaters throughout much of the summer.

In late May of 1988 an extended heat wave hit Pennsylvania. In the next three months many areas of the state experienced nearly 30 days of temperatures over 90 degrees. Add to this heatwave a devastating drought, and you might remember how dreadful trout fishing became that summer.

Talk about bad luck—I chose that summer to complete a book on Pennsylvania trout fishing. Sure, I found plenty of cold water on some of our famous limestone streams like Fishing Creek in Clinton County, Big Spring in Cumberland County, and Tea Creek in Mifflin County. In fact, most of our limestone streams scattered throughout central, southcentral and southeastern Pennsylvania held up well during that summer. Even with a much reduced flow, freestone streams like Fishing Creek in Columbia County held cold water and trout throughout the summer. But many other freestones, especially our great ones in the northcentral part of the state, barely held any water and temperatures rose into the high 70s and low 80s—not your typical ideal trout habitat.

Trout that had survived in these freestone streams searched for cool springs in the main branch or in one of its tributaries. At the mouth of Cedar and Slate runs in Lycoming County, trout seemed to be even more concentrated at the mouths of these streams than in years past. Other cold tributaries to Pine Creek also held good populations of trout struggling to survive the heatwave.



## Youghiogheny River

I had an opportunity in late June of 1988 to fly fish the Youghiogheny River just below Confluence in the southwestern part of the state. Art Gusbar of Somerset met me at the river and gave me the details on the tailwater, or bottom-release fishery. If you don't see Art on the Little Juniata River, you'll see him on the Youghiogheny. He is one of a growing number of great fly fishers in Pennsylvania. That afternoon and evening Art and I had a spectacular matching-the-hatch event on the Youghiogheny. Just enough sulphurs and blue-winged olives appeared to bring some hefty rainbows to the surface.

I enjoyed the river so much on that first trip that Art and I agreed to meet on the river again in July. Art and I parked our car across from Confluence. We then hiked down the path a couple of miles to our final destination on the river. By early afternoon, air temperatures quickly rose into the low 90s. As I entered the water I lowered my thermometer into the cold water flowing past me. When I glanced at the 63-degree reading a minute later, I took a second look. Sixty-three degrees in the middle of a heat wave? You bet! That's because the Youghiogheny and a dozen other Keystone waters have gates that release water from or near the bottom of upriver dams. The water near the bottom of any fairly deep dam remains much cooler during the summer months than water near the top. It's not uncommon to see water temperatures in the high 50s and low 60s on many of these tailwaters throughout much of the summer. Streams and rivers below top-release dams pour much warmer water downriver over the dam breast.

In June 1994, Craig Josephson of Johnstown and I planned a day of fly fishing just below Confluence again on the Youghiogheny River. For the past five days Pennsylvania recorded temperatures well into the 90s. By the time Craig and I prepared to fish, the air temperature already had reached 94 degrees. Because of the heat, Craig decided to wet wade (without boots). We decided to fish in the town of Confluence because a thunderstorm earlier that week on the Casselman watershed had muddied the Youghiogheny downriver. As soon as we entered the cool water we checked the temperature. Would you believe after five days of temperatures over 90 degrees—in the middle of the afternoon—this tailwater registered 54 degrees? Within an hour Craig had to back out of the river and put on a pair of neoprenes.

In the middle of that afternoon, trout rose to a sparse hatch of march browns. The Youghiogheny holds other mayfly hatches,

though none predominates. Often a caddisfly hatch unfolds as the hatch of the day on this river. Carry downwings with body colors of black, green, tan and brown. As with many tailwaters the Youghiogheny holds a heavy number of midge hatches.

In addition to providing a coldwater fishery, tailwaters boast another extremely important feature worthwhile to the angler. While most freestones throughout the state that summer held an alarmingly low flow, streams and waters like the Youghiogheny,

the East Branch of the Clarion River, and Pohopoco Creek boasted flows that remained at or near spring levels. With a dam upriver, water can be held during high runoff and distributed later so that summer flows equal those of spring.

## Delaware River

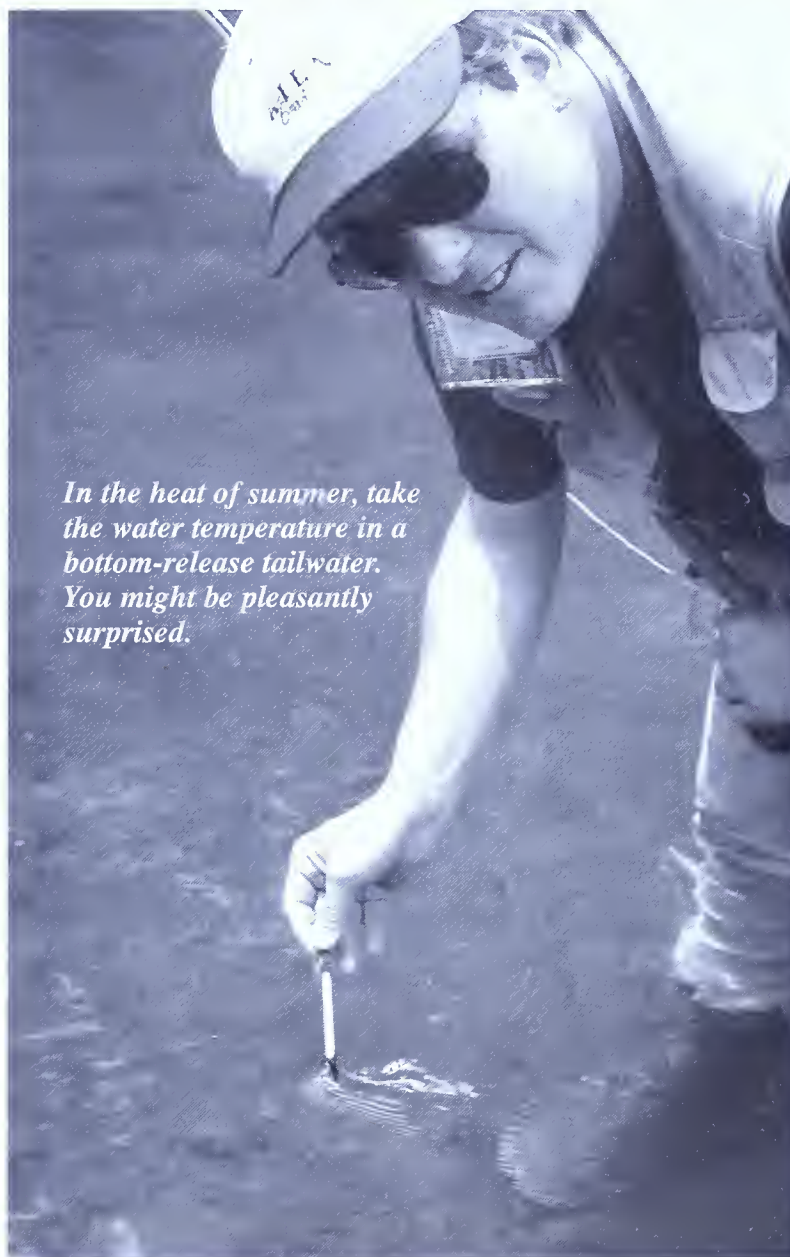
No matter where you fish in Pennsylvania a tailwater is within reach. Everyone knows the quality of fishing on the Delaware River. Cold water throughout the summer has made the area above Equinunk a fantastic trout fishery. Probably the best way to access the river is by boat. You can enter at the Commission Ball's Eddy Access or upriver in state game lands. Make certain before you enter private land that you get permission.

"The only time to fish the Delaware is when a hatch appears." That's how Bob Sentiwany of White Haven feels about fly fishing on this tailwater. Without a hatch this river often looks void of trout. Trying to catch a trout on the Delaware without a hatch can be at the very least

frustrating. Add a hatch like the hendrickson, green drake, gray fox, blue-winged olive dun or brown drake and the river comes alive with huge trout, some of them streambred rainbows. Add some explosive caddisfly hatches to the river and you'll have some unforgettable fishing for hours. The Cannonsville and Downsville reservoirs cool the Delaware from the northern border downriver to Callicoon, New York.

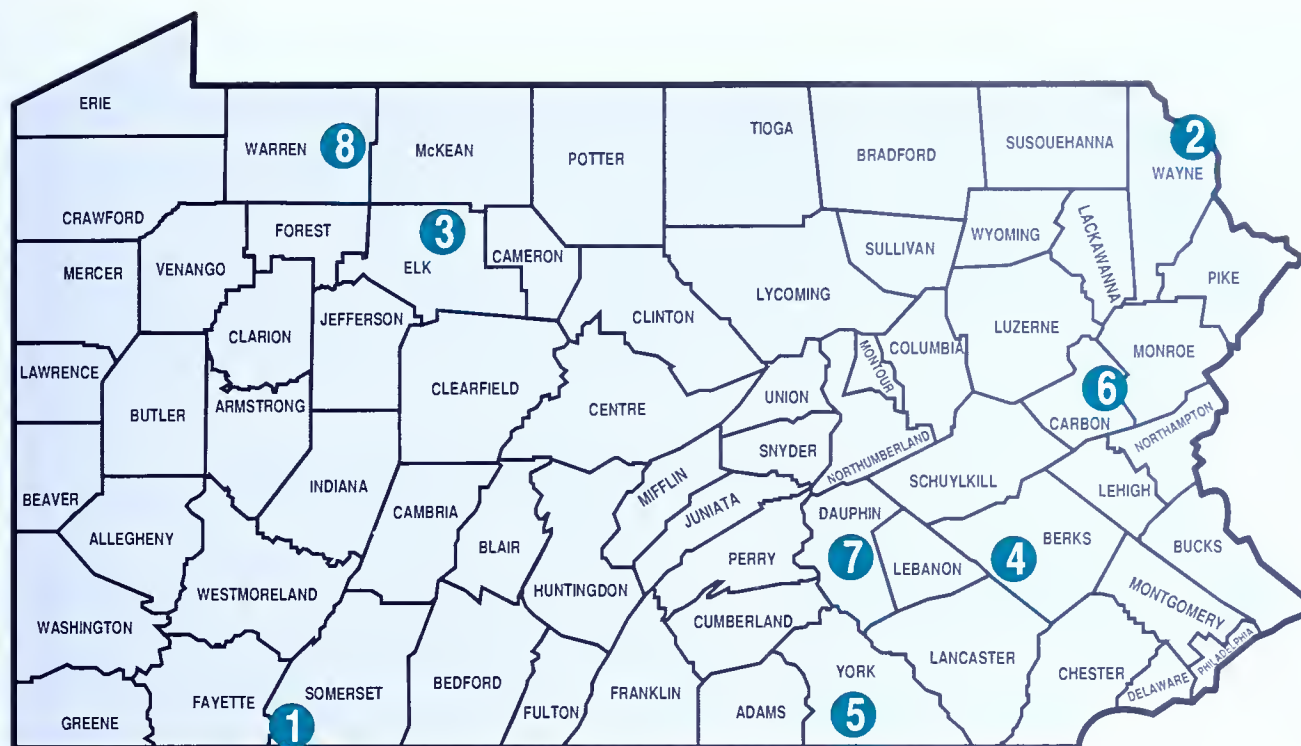
## East Branch of the Clarion River

Bryan Meck and I first fly fished the East Branch of the Clarion River in late August several years ago. Below the East Branch Dam we fished in water temperatures near 60 degrees and caught dozens of fingerling brook trout. By looking at the stream shore you couldn't tell that we fly fished in late August after two weeks of scant precipitation. Even in late summer the East Branch flowed cold and bank-full. All afternoon Bob Baker of Huntingdon, Vince Gigliotti of Punxsutawney, Bryan and I caught trout in the river.



*In the heat of summer, take the water temperature in a bottom-release tailwater. You might be pleasantly surprised.*





## Eight Top Tailwaters

1. Youghiogheny River.
2. Delaware River.
3. East Branch Clarion River.
4. Tulpehocken Creek.
5. Codorus Creek.
6. Pohopoco Creek.
7. Clarks Creek.
8. Allegheny River.

The river has some mine acid problems. One of its tributaries, Swamp Creek, flows into the East Branch Dam. If you travel a mile up this branch you'll find a liming device installed. If you check the pH upstream from the device, you find it around 4.0 (highly acidic) because of drainage from old mines. Below, the limer has elevated the pH above 7.0. Carpenter Run also pours some mine acid into the mainstem.

You'll find fly fishing on the East Branch from the dam downriver to Johnsonburg. If you enjoy fly fishing in cold water that rarely rises above 63 degrees all summer, then you should try the East Branch.

Recently Craig Josephson and I returned to fly fish on the East Branch just several hundred yards below the dam. We talked with several anglers and none did well that day. The water looked like old dishwater, which might indicate that the river still has a mine acid problem.

### Tulpehocken Creek

In southeastern Pennsylvania you'll find a fairly large stream that harbors a good number of large trout and great hatches. Tulpehocken Creek boasts several good caddis hatches early in the season, some yellow drakes in late June, and a terrific trico hatch from July through September.

Tulpehocken Creek flows out of Blue Marsh Dam. Contrasted with the Youghiogheny and West Branch impoundments, Blue Marsh Dam is shallow—only about 45 feet deep. Consequently, the water warms considerably in mid-summer. Dick Henry of Lebanon fly fishes the stream frequently. He's kept a record on the stream and has encountered water temperatures in the high 70s in mid-summer and late summer. I've heard others complain that they sometimes found 80-degree-plus temperature readings. Under these conditions trout fishing can become slow. I recently traveled to the Reber's Bridge area of the Tulpehocken and found the stream almost in flood stage after a heavy thunderstorm. When I checked the temperature that late June afternoon, I recorded a 74-degree reading—not what you'd think it should be on your typical tailwater.

Hatches abound on this medium-sized tailwater. Even in late

April and early May you can match some green caddisflies on the water with a size 16 pattern. Several years ago Dick Henry, Larry Gasser, Elwood Gettle and I hit this green caddis hatch in early May. We had spectacular fly fishing on this tailwater for several hours.

Throughout the summer, if water temperatures remain relatively cool, you'll find trico hatches appearing every morning on part of the stream. The Tulpehocken contains almost four miles of delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only water.

### Codorus Creek

When you think of tailwaters you normally think of big rivers. Codorus Creek doesn't fit that picture. It flows out of Lake Marburg near Hanover in southcentral Pennsylvania. Codorus Creek ranges from 20 to 30 feet wide but carries good volume and cool water all summer long.

Andre Lijoi of Hanover and Bryan Meck of York fly fish this stream throughout the summer. Bryan has found that a Beadhead Woolly Bugger with a Flashabou tail works much of the year, but it's especially effective during April and May. He's also found the Green Weenie to be a good choice throughout the year.

The stream holds a good population of streambred browns and rainbows. Bryan and Andre have caught browns up to 17 inches long. Both anglers find good trout fishing downstream to Menges Mills.

The Codorus holds some respectable hatches. Early in the season you can expect to see hendricksons and a size 14 brown caddis. By mid-May sulphurs begin emerging. If you hit the stream when the sulphur appears, you can experience a memorable fly fishing day. If you enjoy small stream fly fishing in cold water with the possibility of meeting a sulphur hatch, then fish Codorus Creek in late May.

### Pohopoco Creek

Pohopoco Creek flows through rhododendron-filled forests just below Kresgeville in northeastern Pennsylvania. Then it enters Beltzville Reservoir just upstream from Lehigh. When



# 8 Top Tailwaters

No matter where you fish in Pennsylvania a tailwater is within reach.



it exits the reservoir it becomes a totally new stream with additional cold water flowing bank-full much of the summer. This rejuvenated tailwater flows for just three miles before it enters the Lehigh River at Lehighton.

Matt Behler of Palmerton said his brother, Dan, lived near the spot where the Beltzville dam breast now sits. Matt has fly fished the tailwater when fantastic hatches of sulphurs have appeared. Matt says the best sulphur hatches occur from late May through much of July. He's caught trout up to 20 inches long on the tailwater. If you fish the cold water below the dam, you'll often find Matt, always accompanied by his black lab, Homer, fly fishing the cold waters of the lower end of the Pohopoco. You'll also find some blue-winged olives on the tailwater throughout much of June and July.

Matt says the section below Sawmill Run holds the best pools and the most trout.

## Clarks Creek

Few anglers consider Clarks Creek a tailwater. But just enter the stream below the DeHart Reservoir on a hot July morning and you'll know that it is. Temperatures at that time of year usually run around 60 degrees and you'll find a good supply of brook trout. The stream flow also belies its tailwater designation. Look at the two-mile regulated water and you'll find slow pools interspersed with a few fishable riffles. Much of the stream holds a dense canopy of hemlock.

Recently Bryan Meck and I fly fished the upper section of the delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only section. In late June you'll find few hatches, so Bryan recommended that I use a Green Weenie. Just this past year he had an unbelievably successful day with the same pattern in July.

In the first slow section at the upper end of the project water, I cast the Green Weenie. Within seconds several trout swirled around the pattern and finally one hit. I landed a 10-inch brookie

and cast the pattern again in the same general direction. A short time later a second trout hit the pattern. All morning long on that delayed-harvest section of Clarks Creek trout hit the Green Weenie. Bryan and I caught and released more than a dozen trout that hot morning.

Even though flow from the dam during the summer is low, the water temperature holds up well. I recorded a 59-degree reading in late June after several weeks of hot weather.

Clarks holds some good hatches. Most of them appear in April and May. You'll find hendricksons, blue quills and great speckled olive duns in April and March Browns and sulphurs in mid-May to late May. Greg Hoover, a skilled aquatic entomologist with Penn State University, first identified the great speckled olive dun on this stream.

## Allegheny River

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built Kinzua Dam more than two decades ago. Chris Mosebach, resource manager at the dam, says that the primary reason for building the dam was flood control on the Allegheny River. Shortly after they installed the dam, anglers found trout in the tailwater below. After several stockings reports of huge trout in the river were commonplace. More recently fishing below the tailwater has diminished. The philosophy of the tailwater is to present the least amount of impact on the water below as possible.

Craig Josephson and I recently attempted to fish the river below the dam. Because of recent storms in the area, the tailwater had been unfishable for much of the summer of 1994.

Are you tired of searching for cold water in the middle of summer? Do you long for those April days when water temperatures remain in the high 50s? Then try one of Pennsylvania's tailwaters. You'll find one near you.





# POOL 8 WALLEYES SAUGERS

BY JEFF KNAPP

The place could hardly be described as a hole. "Divot" would be more appropriate, just a small depression in the river bottom downriver of Allegheny River Lock and Dam (L&D) 9.

Well above us the river plunged over the fixed-crest dam, turning frothy white as it surged past the ice breakers. Then the current raged for a few hundred feet. But we were below this violent action, in a place where the current slackened. The bottom was featureless, about 18 feet deep, except for the spot where my partner Dave Keith was holding the boat. Here it dropped to about 21 feet. The place wasn't much bigger than our boat, but it held walleyes.

As we hovered near the marker buoy we had dropped to mark the spot, we dropped minnow-tipped jigs into the depression. Before long our rods danced with fighting fish. When we left the spot an hour later, we had about a half-dozen fat walleyes in the 18-inch range.

The place we were fishing was part of Pool 8, the uppermost portion of the Allegheny River where dams mark both the upriver and downriver ends. "Pool" is the official designation given to navigable rivers by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Pool 8 is located between L&D 8 and L&D 9. L&D 8 is located near Templeton, at mile marker 52—it's located 52 miles upriver of The Point in Pittsburgh. L&D 9 is 10 miles farther upriver, above the tiny village of Rimer, actually a cluster of riverside cottages. L&D 9 is the last navigation dam on the Allegheny River.

The 10 miles of Pool 8 are bordered by steep, heavily wooded hillsides. In places, camps and cottages line the shore. In others, the place seems more removed from civilization. It's one of the prettiest sections of the 72 miles of navigable water of the Allegheny.

The river itself is deep in Pool 8, averaging about 25 feet in the channel. There are several spots in the 50-foot range. The deep water comes from years of commercial dredging. Sand and gravel have been removed because of their value as a building commodity. Even though some anglers like to hear of deep water, particularly in river situations, it's unlikely this removal of habitat has had a positive effect on the fishery. In fact, the effects of dredging are now part of a continuing study conducted by the Fish and Boat Commission and federal agencies. Part of the secret of fishing Pool 8 is in finding shallow water instead of deep stuff.

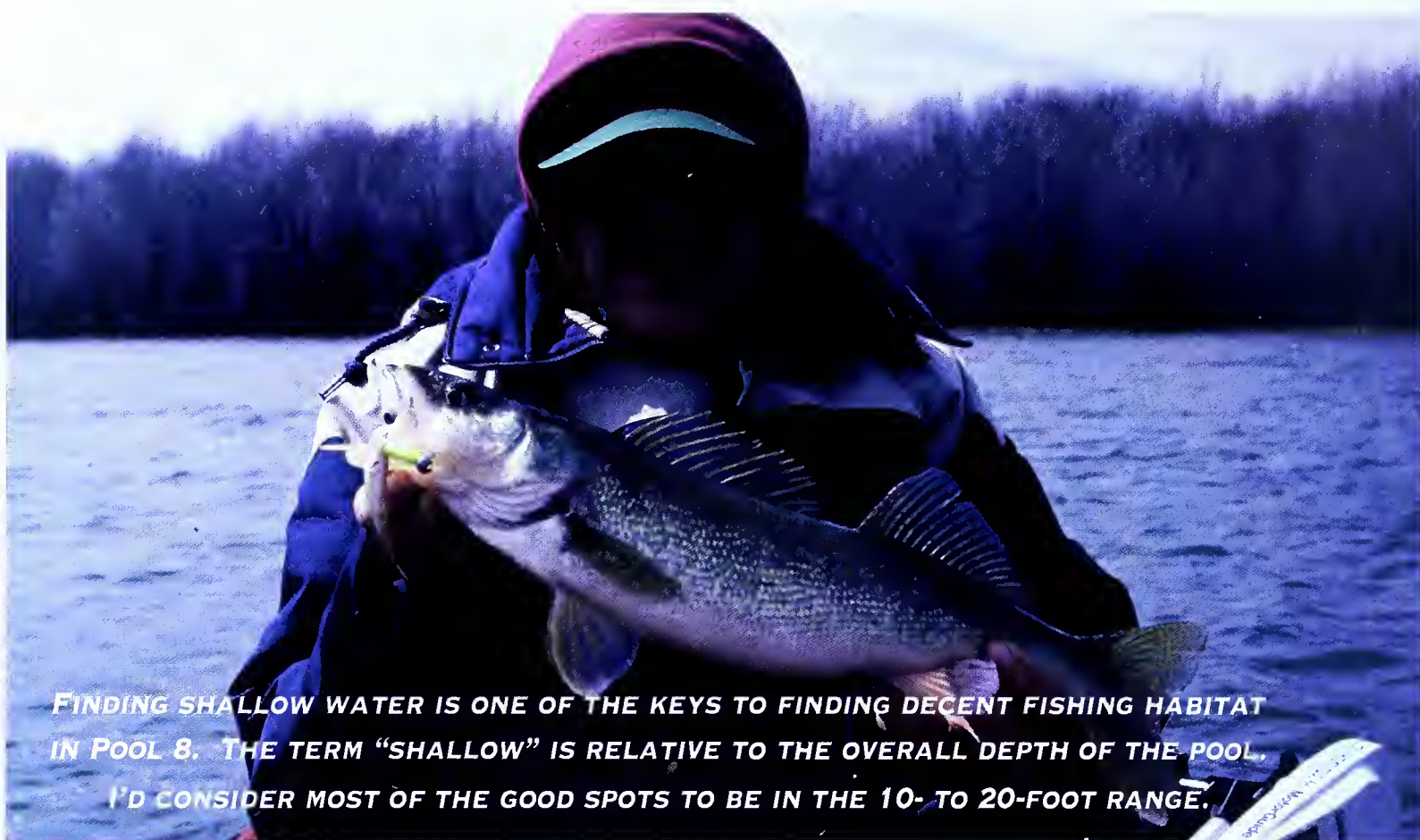
## Fisheries background

Both walleyes and saugers are native to the Allegheny River. Ron Lee, Commission Area 2 Fisheries Manager for the region that includes the upper portion of the Allegheny River, stocks walleyes as far downriver as L&D 6. The agency's efforts augment what occurs naturally. It's likely there is ample natural reproduction, because the river isn't stocked from L&D 6 down to Pittsburgh, and there are excellent walleye populations in that area.



*The Allegheny River's Pool 8, Armstrong County, holds fine walleye and sauger populations.*





**FINDING SHALLOW WATER IS ONE OF THE KEYS TO FINDING DECENT FISHING HABITAT IN POOL 8. THE TERM "SHALLOW" IS RELATIVE TO THE OVERALL DEPTH OF THE POOL. I'D CONSIDER MOST OF THE GOOD SPOTS TO BE IN THE 10- TO 20-FOOT RANGE.**

Saugers have been a different story. Their numbers are totally self-sustaining, and quite new to the Pool 8 section. I've fished the Allegheny extensively, during the winter months, for at least 10 years. Not long ago it was uncommon to catch a sauger upriver of Pool 6. Sauger numbers weren't numerous in the Allegheny. But as the Ohio River cleaned up, more and more saugers moved through that river into the Allegheny, bolstering their numbers. Today on many areas of the Allegheny—particularly from Pool 5 downriver to Pittsburgh—sauger numbers often outnumber those of their closely related cousin, the walleye.

The sauger's movement into pools above Kittanning has been slow, depending on fish traversing the dams by way of the lock chambers. There has also been some question on how well saugers would take in the upper pools, because the water there is cleaner and clearer than it is farther downriver. Saugers have even more light-sensitive eyes than walleyes, and they prefer more turbid environments. Nevertheless, anglers the past two seasons have experienced excellent fishing for saugers in both pools 7 and 8, and there have even been reports of saugers venturing above the navigable portion of the river into the free-flowing waters.

Because the sauger population, and walleye population to a large degree, depends on natural reproduction, their numbers can fluctuate with the conditions of recent spawning years. Saugers can reach legal size (12 inches) in about a year-and-a-half. They grow quickly, and also suffer a great deal of natural mortality after they've moved into the three- to four-year age class. They simply break down physiologically; they die of old age. After a couple of years of poor reproduction conditions—high water and prolonged cool spring weather—you'll notice the sauger population plummet quickly. Conversely, a couple of good years can bring things up to speed in a hurry. Going into the winter of 1994-95, the Allegheny has had three years of good to excellent reproduction.

As a matter of interest, walleyes grow much slower, but stay in the fishery longer. It takes about three years for a walleye to reach the legal length of 15 inches.

Here's a look at some of the better spots to find walleyes and saugers in Pool 8.

As was previously mentioned, finding shallow water is one of the keys to finding decent fishing habitat in Pool 8. The term "shallow" is relative to the overall depth of the pool. I'd consider most of the good spots to be in the 10- to 20-foot range.

As in any winter walleye situation, one of the primary considerations is current. Areas with heavy current, regardless of depth, are not likely to hold numbers of walleyes or saugers.

### Hotwater discharges

Talk to anyone familiar with the fishing in Pool 8, particularly about the cold-water period, and you'll hear comments on the hot water discharges from a West Penn Power Company coal-fired plant across the river from Templeton. This plant looms above the western bank of the river, giving an industrial look to what is otherwise a rustic setting.

Hot water is discharged into the river near the plant, via an outlet that is obvious from the river. The bloom of warm water hugs the western bank. This is a popular spot not only for walleyes and saugers, but for any species found in the river.

Across from the plant, on the east side of the river, is the mouth of Mahoning Creek, by far the largest feeder stream to enter Pool 8. This is a spot worth spending some time on.

I remember well a late-afternoon mega-bite Dave Keith and I experienced there one mild March day. It was the last weekend of the season, and a few extra boats were on the water, something unusual after having the river to ourselves for the past three months.

By anchoring near the mouth of Mahoning, Dave and I connected on cast after cast. The action didn't quit until the river



was dark, when the only illumination provided was by the big power plant on the opposite shore.

The mouth of Mahoning Creek is similar to many streams of the same size. There's a slackwater basin in the creek, created by the impoundment of the Allegheny at Lock & Dam 8. Soft material, muck and sand builds up in a delta-like fashion at the mouth of the creek. The main current of the Allegheny shaves off the edge of the delta at a 90-degree angle, providing a small but important dropoff that fish migrate along. When fishing a creek mouth like Mahoning, the key is to anchor in the deeper water just off the shallow flat. That way the flat, dropoff and base of the dropoff can be fished on one cast.

A great deal of shore fishing is done at the mouth of Mahoning Creek, particularly on the upriver side. There's a railroad bridge that crosses the stream, and some folks fish off of it.

Moving up the river from Mahoning Creek, the river goes into a huge bend that lasts for well over two miles. There's some interesting rocky areas along this bend, and I've caught smallmouth bass there during warmer months, but not much in the way of walleyes or saugers. As the bend ends, and the river swings back to the west, two small tributaries enter the river, one of which is Rattlesnake Run. There's productive water both above and below the big gravel bar formed by these two tributaries.

The bar acts as a small dam. Above the bar, the current is slowed and the river is about 10 to 15 feet deep. Below the rock bar the water is a bit deeper. Both of these areas should be fished by drifting through them.

It's a few more miles up the river to the dam, and the next series of good spots. The water from L&D 8 downstream about a mile has several possibilities. The river in general is more shallow there.


On the western bank of the river is a marina, one that's closed this time of year. Just downriver from the marina, in the vicinity of the facility's private boat ramp, is a deeper slot in the gravel bottom. It's about 100 feet long, maybe half that wide. The depth is about 20 feet. If you can locate this spot, chances are good that a drift or two through it will cough up some fish.

In front of the marina itself is a shallow, sandy flat that drops slowly into deeper water. It's a place that produces smallmouths in the fall, but doesn't look like much for walleyes or saugers. On one unusually warm March day, Keith and I cast jigs up on the flat as the boat drifted slowly down the river. We caught several exceptionally fat walleyes, ones that seemed to be bulking up on the mayfly nymphs found over the muddy flats. That was a lesson learned and filed for the future.

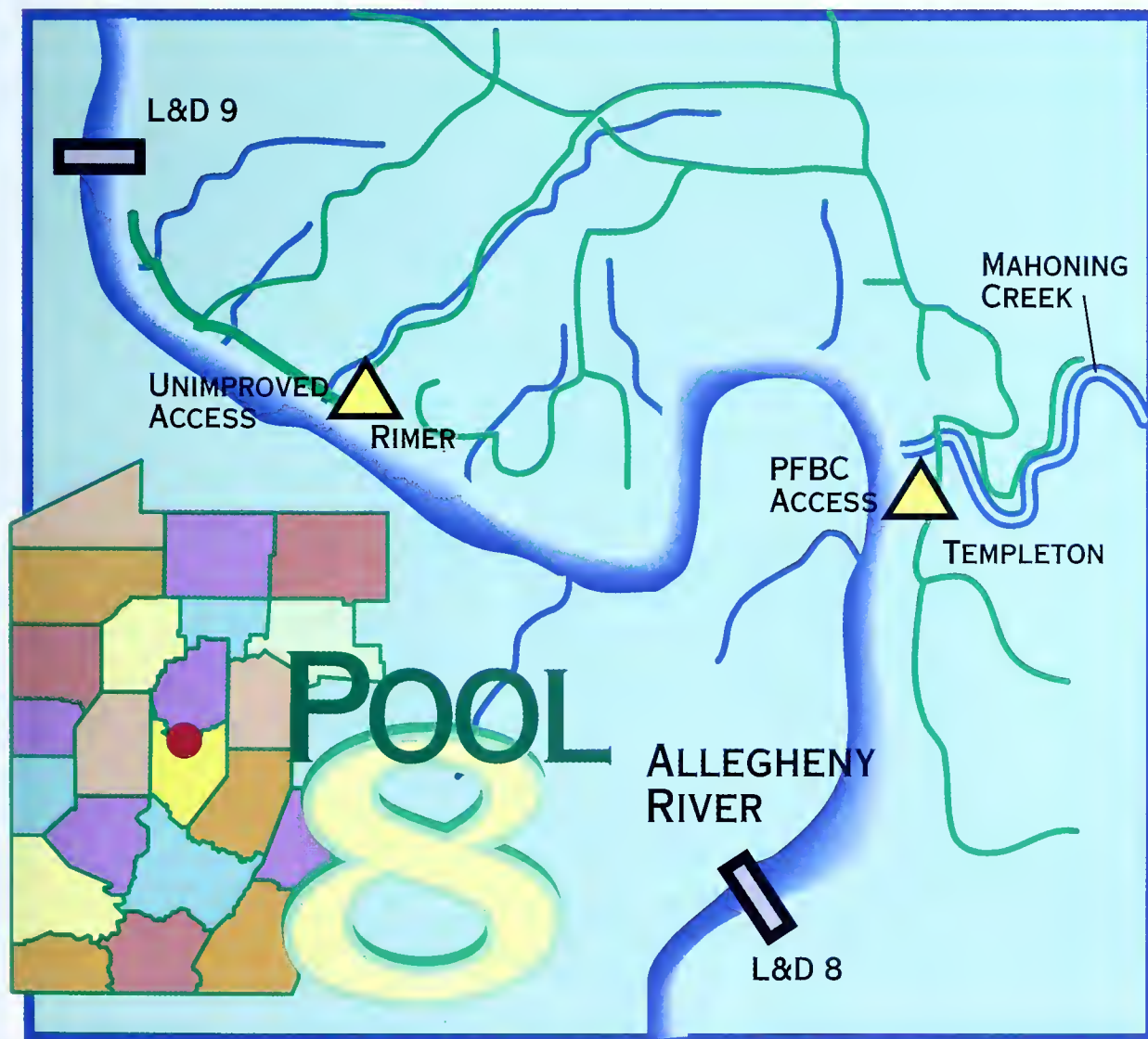
Moving up to the tailrace of L&D 9, walleyes and saugers can be caught by drifting below the lock mouth. This facility is closed during the winter months, and the lock provides a current barrier, with fish stacking up behind it. Some days it pays to fish within the lock itself.

On the opposite side of the river, there's a hydroelectric generating plant. It took a couple of years for developers to put in the plant. During the construction phase, huge pilings blocked the river's force. During those two winters we had the best walleye fishing ever on Pool 8, by concentrating on the slackwater hole

behind the pilings. Unfortunately, the plant is now in operation, and all that has changed. Boating near the plant is dangerous, and is prohibited.

Pool 8 doesn't have the diversity as some areas farther downriver, but there is good walleye and sauger fishing there, and it takes place in a scenic environment. 

*Pool 8, the water between L&D 8 and L&D 9, is about 10 miles long. Charts of the Allegheny River navigable waters are available from: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Moorehead Federal Building, 100 Liberty Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15222. Send requests for information to the attention of "River Charts." For more information on lodging and camping in the area, contact the Armstrong County Tourist Bureau at 402 East Market Street, Kittanning, PA 16201. The phone number is (412) 548-3226.*





# POOL 8 WALLEYES & SAUGERS

**WHEN FISHING A CREEK MOUTH LIKE MAHONING, THE KEY IS TO ANCHOR IN THE DEEPER WATER JUST OFF THE SHALLOW FLAT. THAT WAY THE FLAT, DROPOFF AND BASE OF THE DROPOFF CAN BE FISHED ON ONE CAST.**

## IDENTIFICATION

Walleyes and saugers are cousins, both members of the perch family. They look alike, but it isn't overly difficult to tell the difference between the two.

Adult walleyes have a large black spot at the base of the first (spiny ray) dorsal fin. Sauger's don't have this spot.

Saugers have deep-colored saddles that extend down the side of the fish as broad bars. Walleyes rarely have any saddling beyond the lateral line.

Identification of the fish is important, if you plan to harvest fish, because saugers must be only 12 inches to harvest, and a walleye must be 15 inches. The limit on each is six.

Saugers are just as good on the table as are walleyes. Though the fish can legally be killed at the 12-inch mark, saugers don't have a lot of meat on them until they get closer to that 15-inch mark.

In the case of either fish, don't bring home any more than you need.—JK.

## ACCESS

If there's a downside to fishing Pool 8, it's the relative lack of public access, and that the roads leading to the available accesses are secondary ones.

The Fish and Boat Commission has a ramp on Game Lands 287 on the outskirts of Templeton. Travelers coming in from Kittanning can take SR 1033 into town. The access is located at the upriver end of town. There's a narrow concrete ramp and ample parking.

Near the town of Rimer, there's a place on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property where many folks launch their craft. It's an unimproved area, actually a sand bar washed out by a small stream, but it can be used in good conditions. The advantage of using this spot is that it puts you close to the good fishing below L&D 9. It can be a long, cold boat ride from the Templeton access.—JK.



# Cast and Caught



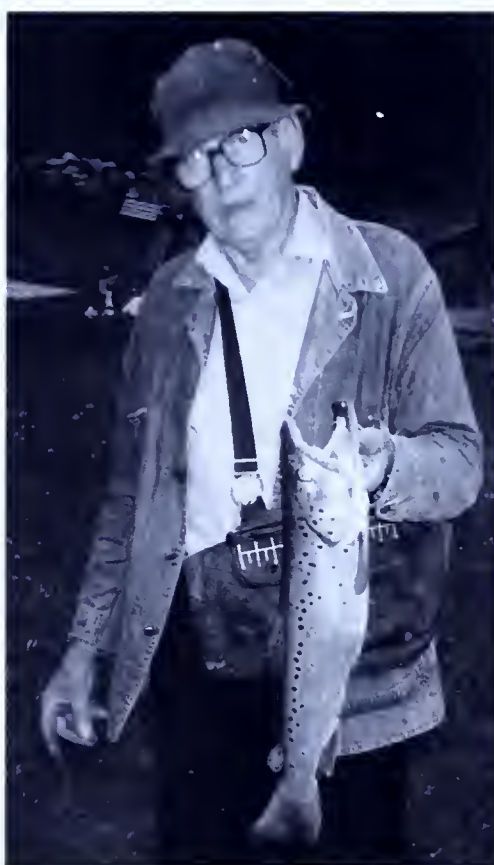
Dunmore resident Mark Fortese used a shiner to entice this chain pickerel to strike. The fish, caught out of Lake Wallenpaupack, weighed 6 pounds, 11 ounces and was 28 1/2 inches long.



Six-year-old Laura Lawson, of Mechanicsburg, caught and released this largemouth bass last spring. The fish, caught in Pinchot Lake, measured 19 inches. Great job, Laura!



Jeff Cutler, Pottsville, caught this 30-inch brown trout in Wallenpaupack Creek, Pike County. He nailed the fish with a shiner. The brown trout weighed 13 pounds, 8 ounces. Nice fish, Jeff!



Arcadia resident Michael Burba was fishing on Cush Creek, Indiana County, when this brown trout grabbed his bait. The fish, caught on a nightcrawler, was 23 3/4 inches long and weighed 4 pounds.



Outdoor writer and Angler contributor John Pinola shows a 5-pound, 2-ounce smallmouth bass he caught in the Delaware River. The fish measured 21 inches and fell for a jig.



Robert Kozlowski, Sr., Bethlehem, fooled this musky with a live minnow in Lake Ontelaunee while ice fishing. The musky weighed 17 1/2 pounds and was 41 1/2 inches long.



George Belaus, Throop, fooled this 20 1/4-inch largemouth bass last January. The fish weighed about 4 1/2 pounds.



## Extended Season Stockings

The following waters are approved for the "extended trout season" and are scheduled to be stocked in January and February 1995. A total of 76,650 adult trout will be stocked in 47 lakes and two rivers. Trout fishing on these waters is permitted until midnight March 31, with a daily creel limit of three fish (combined species).

County	Waterway
Allegheny	North Park Lake
Beaver	Brady Run Lake
Beaver	Hereford Manor Lake—Lower
Beaver	Hereford Manor Lake—Upper
Beaver	Raccoon Lake
Berks	Angelica Lake
Berks	Antietam Lake
Berks	Scotts Run Lake
Blair	Canoe Lake
Bucks	Lake Luxembourg
Bucks	Levittown Lake
Butler	Glade Run Lake
Cambria	Duman Dam
Cambria	Lake Rowena
Cameron	George B. Stevenson Reservoir
Clinton	Kettle Creek Lake
Columbia	Briar Creek Lake
Cumberland	Laurel Lake
Cumberland	Opossum Creek Lake
Erie	Lake Pleasant
Erie	Upper Gravel Pit
Fayette	Dunlap Creek Lake
Fayette	Virgin Run Dam
Fulton	Cowans Gap Lake
Greene	Duke Lake
Jefferson	Cloe Lake
Lackawanna	Merli Sarnoski Lake
Lawrence	Bessemer Lake
Lebanon	Stovers Dam
Luzerne	Irena Lake
Luzerne	Moon Lake
Lycoming	Little Pine Lake
Mercer	Shenango River (tailwaters)
Monroe	Hidden Lake
Northampton	Minsi Lake
Potter	Lyman Lake
Schuylkill	Locust Lake
Somerset	Laurel Hill Lake
Somerset	Youghiogheny River (tailwaters)
Tioga	Lake Hamilton
Venango	Justus Lake
Warren	Chapman Lake
Washington	Canonsburg Lake
Washington	Dutch Fork Lake
Westmoreland	Donegal Lake
Westmoreland	Keystone Lake
Westmoreland	Mammoth Lake
Westmoreland	Northmoreland Lake
Westmoreland	Twin Lake—Lower

## Deer Creek Access Improvement Completed

The second phase of improvements at the Fish and Boat Commission's Deer Creek Access Area has been completed, making the Allegheny County site one of the largest in the Commonwealth. The Deer Creek Access now boasts three parking areas, including slots to accommodate 91 car/trailer combinations and 44 single vehicles. Boat launching has been improved through the construction of a four-lane ramp. Additionally, a pier with a floating dock will be in place for use beginning next season.

The Commission's improvement project at Deer Creek has been spread out over the course of two summers. Beginning in 1993, more than 6,200 man-hours have been devoted to this work. In all, the agency has devoted nearly \$200,000 to the upgrade, including \$114,000 in material costs alone.

The result has been a quadrupling of available parking as well as the addition of a "state-of-the-art" concrete launch ramp.

The Deer Creek Access is located off Route 28 at 2526 Wenzel Drive, Harmarville, minutes from downtown Pittsburgh. The site offers free fishing and boating access to the Allegheny River.

The expansion of the facilities there underscores the Commission's commitment to providing fishing and boating opportunities. Allegheny County typically leads all Pennsylvania counties in the sale of fishing licenses and boating registrations.—*Dan Tredinnick*.

## Notice to Subscribers

Act 1982-88 provides that certain records of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission are not public records for purposes of the Right-to-Know Law. This means that the Commission can place appropriate conditions on the release of such records. The Commission makes the subscriber list for *Pennsylvania Angler* available to statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan fishing, boating and sportsmen's organizations for nonprofit, noncommercial organizational purposes under limited circumstances.

If you do not want your name and address included on the subscriber mailing list to be made available to the described organizations, you must notify the Commission in writing before February 15, 1995. Send a postcard or letter stating, "Please exclude my name and address from *Pennsylvania Angler's* subscriber mailing list." Send these notifications to Eleanor Mutch, *PA Angler* Circulation, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.

## New Art Competition Rules

The Commission is seeking wildlife artists to participate in the 1996 Pennsylvania Trout/Salmon Stamp and Print competition. Artists can submit a work featuring one of the Commonwealth's scenic waters.

The work must be in oil, acrylic or water color.

Entries must be submitted by 4 p.m., May 18, 1995. Judging will be held May 25, 1995, at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, Kleinfeltersville.

For complete information, including the official rules of entry, artists should write to Timothy L. Klinger, Trout/Salmon Stamp Program Manager, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000, or call (717) 657-4537.



## October 24 Commission Meeting Highlights

The Fish and Boat Commission has designated a seven-mile stretch of Penns Creek, Centre County, as a special wild trout fishery. The action was taken at the Commission's quarterly meeting last October 24 in Scranton.

The stretch of Penns Creek extending downstream from the confluence of Elk Creek (near Coburn) is noted for its annual "shad fly" hatch. Biological surveys in 1991 and 1992 revealed a thriving wild brown trout population in these waters. Stocking of the area was discontinued in 1993.

Under the new special regulations adopted by the Commission, the seven miles of Penns Creek downstream from Elk Creek will be managed for year-round trophy wild trout angling. A 14-inch minimum size limit and a two-trout daily creel restriction from the opening day of trout season until Labor Day will be observed. Catch-and-release fishing will be permitted the remainder of the time.

There will be no tackle restriction on this unique stretch of Penns Creek. Flies, artificial lures and bait will be permitted.

### In other action

- A permitting procedure allowing persons with disabilities to operate motorized vehicles on Commission property and to use bows, spears and gigs was adopted. The permits will be available only by application to the Commission's Bureau of Law Enforcement.

- Regulations addressing the field dressing of fish were modified to allow for the possibility of licensed cleaning stations.

- Rulemaking requiring catch-and-release fishing from Labor Day to the opening of trout season was adopted for those streams regulated under the Selective Harvest and Trophy Trout programs.

- Special regulations were adopted for Lake Scranton, Lackawanna County, which permit only severely disabled anglers and an assistant to fish from a specially designated pier.

- The Commission adopted special regulations for Indian Lake, Westmoreland County. Under the new restrictions, a 15-inch, two-fish daily limit will be in place for bass. A 10-fish daily limit for panfish was also adopted.

- Calibration and operator certification guidelines for the use of radar to enforce numerical speed limits for boats were approved.

- The Fish and Boat Code was amended to permit authorized vessels to violate speed and motor restrictions in those instances when compliance would impede performance of official duties. This exemption applies to law enforcement and emergency boats owned by federal, state and local agencies.

- A 45 mph speed limit was adopted for three state park lakes: Beltzville Lake, Carbon County; Foster Joseph Sayers Lake, Centre County; and East Branch Clarion River Lake, Elk County.

- A speed and size limit for boats on Treasure Lake, Clearfield County, and a motor restriction on Bimini Lake, Clearfield County, were approved. Both lakes are privately owned waters.

- Two special regulations were adopted for Shenango Lake, Mercer County. A 500-acre section of the lake west of the Penn Central Railroad causeway will now be open to boats 10 horsepower or smaller. Previously, only electric motors were permitted in this area.

A second area, known as Duck Lake, will now be open to motorboats at slow, minimum-height-swell speed. Previously, only electric motors were permitted.

- A slow, minimum-height-swell speed zone was established on the Susquehanna River, Northumberland County, for a por-

tion of Lake Augusta. The speed limit will be in place from the Shikellamy State Park boat launch upriver for approximately 1/3-mile.

Numerous items for proposed rulemaking were brought before the Commissioners. The following items were tentatively approved, and as such are now open for public comment before a vote on final adoption is held at a date to be announced later.

- A code modification clarifying the definition of state of principle operation for boats, including a provision that the mooring of a vessel for more than 14 days at a facility in the Commonwealth is prima facie evidence that Pennsylvania is the state of principle operation.

- Language that clarifies when a boat may be registered in the name of a deceased owner.

- Fish and Boat Code language clarifying that lights should be displayed while under way.

- Language noting that a Coast Guard approval number must be displayed on all marine fire extinguishers.

- A code clarification outlining that, whenever possible, boats should operate in a counterclockwise flow of traffic.

- A "no-motorboat" restriction on Highland Lake, Bradford County.

- A proposal for a slow, minimum-height-swell speed from the Fish and Boat Commission boat launch to the head of the cove at Fairview Lake, Pike County.

- Proposed language noting that aids to navigation should not be used as the sole determination for the position of a hazard.

- A Fish and Boat Code amendment noting that a boating accident report form must be completely and legibly filled out before required submission.

- A proposed property regulation granting the Executive Director the right to set fees charged for the use of mooring slips at Commission marinas or accesses.

- A correction in the recodification of a special boat restriction on Long Pond, Wayne County. The code should be amended to read that waterskiing is permitted from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. on weekends and holidays and from 10 a.m. until sunset on weekdays other than holidays.

- Proposed rulemaking that outlines that the duty of operators is to remain on the scene of watercraft accidents.

- A proposal that would permit non-Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices to be used by sculls, shells and racing kayaks on Commission-owned lakes.

- Suggested rulemaking that makes boat livery operations responsible for providing basic safety information to rental customers.

- Changes that would put tighter restrictions on taking and possessing reptiles, amphibians and eggs.

- Four possible additions to the delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only program were suggested: A 1.3-mile stretch of Black Moshannon Creek, Centre County; a 1.5-mile stretch of Pickering Creek, Chester County; a 1.7-mile stretch of the West Branch of Wallenpaupack Creek, Wayne County, and a 1.4-mile stretch of Pine Creek, Allegheny County.

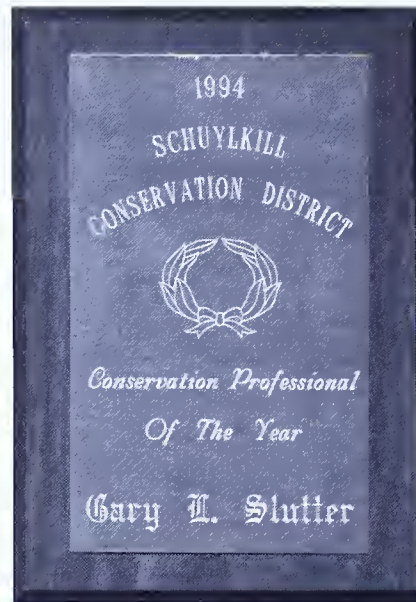
- Big Bass regulations were recommended for Mill Run Reservoir, Fayette County.

- A small area downstream of Brisbin Dam, Brisbin Borough, Clearfield County, was suggested for the exclusive use of children and special populations.—*Dan Tredinnick.*





WCO Gary L. Slutter, Schuylkill County, was recently named Conservation Professional of the Year by the Schuylkill County Conservation District. Slutter received the award for his outstanding work with the young people of the county in fishing, boating and conservation education, and for his efforts in improving water quality in Schuylkill County. Slutter has been a WCO since 1982.



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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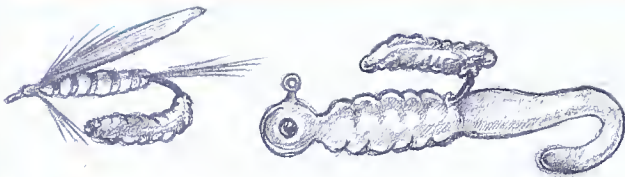
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## Angler's Notebook by Jeff Bryan



Bluegills offer excellent winter sport for fishermen using small jigs and flies. Colors to try are fluorescent orange and red, and the darker, more natural colors. Adding a small grub (the natural, not the plastic imitation) to the jig provides smell and taste and can often improve the fishing.

Perhaps the primary reason smallmouth bass prefer rocky points, rip-rap shores, and gravel islands, is their fondness for crayfish. Where crayfish are abundant, they are the preferred food for the smallmouth. Seek out these areas when searching for this aggressive fighter.

When you catch a big fish, Whether it's a large trout in a river or a trophy bass from your favorite lake, remember the spot where you caught it. Sooner or later another big fish will move into the same place to take its place.

Beginning trout fishermen can find it difficult to see tiny dry flies as they float on the water. Try using bushy, white-winged dry flies such as the Royal Wulff, the Renegade, and the Bivisible. These flies are much easier to see, float well, and can be fished as effectively in fast, broken water as they can in a quiet pool.

When fishing for bass in deep water, whether it is early in the year or late in the fall, you need to be alert for the strike of a sluggish fish. Deep-water bass often pick up a lure very softly, so set the hook at the slightest indication of a strike.

Illustration: Ted Walke

Yellow perch are usually the most active of the panfish during winter months. They tend to move in schools around river channels and weed beds. If you're ice fishing for them, plan to stay until dark as they become most active toward evening.

When walking through the woods with your fly rod, carry it butt-first, with the tip of the rod pointing behind you. If you angle the rod so the tip is traveling directly behind your back, you'll eliminate many of those aggravating tree-limb snags. Furthermore, if you were to trip and fall, having the rod pointing behind you can save you from replacing a broken tip section.

You might find your crankbaits, and wobbling lures, running with a better action if you replace the treble hooks with single hooks. Give them a test in the bathtub to judge the action. Using single hooks on these lures will reduce the amount of hang-ups, as well as make it easier to remove the hooks from the fish's mouth.

When trolling, it is a good idea to begin by running one line long and deep behind the boat, with the other line fairly short and shallow. This will help you determine at what level the fish are feeding, and it's easy to change a rod, should they favor one over the other.

Many anglers fish surface plugs for bass much too fast. In fact, it is probably impossible to fish them too slowly. Cast the plug out and allow it to sit until the ripples die away, then reel the lure in slowly, stopping and twitching.

Make sure your reels, no matter what type, are full of line. Not only do you want to have plenty of line, should the "fish of a lifetime" decide to take off on a long run, but a full reel casts much farther and easier than one that isn't.



# SMART

## Angler's Notebook

by Carl Richardson

### A Padded Fishing Seat

Make a fishing seat out of any five-gallon plastic bucket with a lid and handle. Mine is an old paint bucket. I use it to haul my tip-ups and ice fishing gear, or stash my crappie minnows and later my catch.

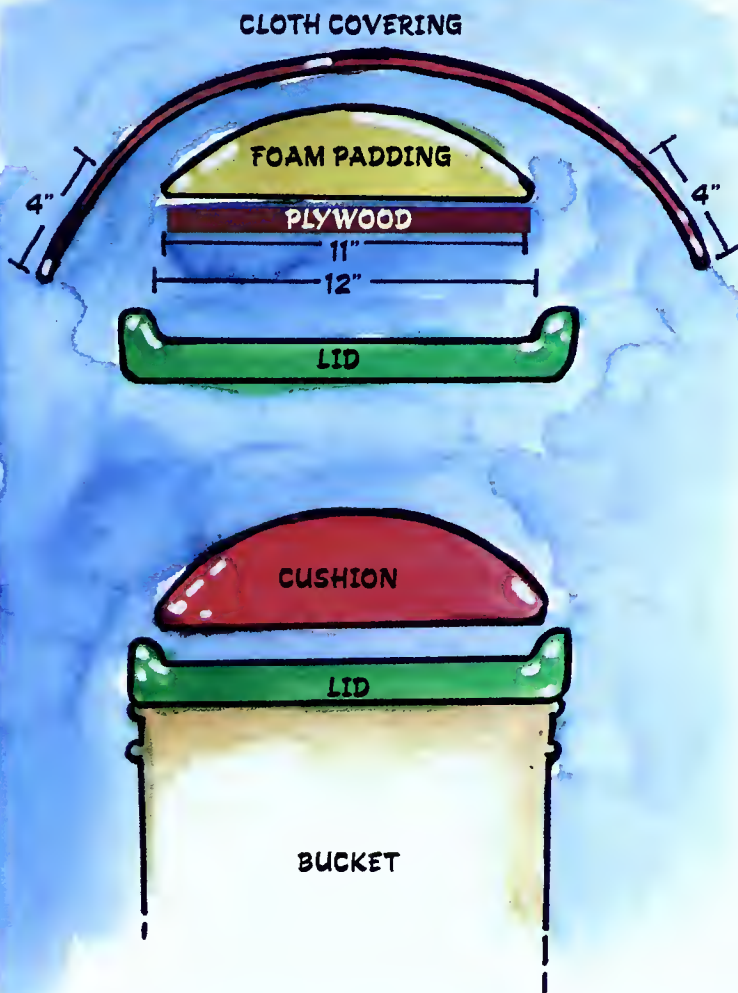
#### DIRECTIONS

Clean the bucket and measure the lid. Mark a circle on the plywood that is one inch less than the lid itself. Lay the wood circle on the material and mark a circle on the material so you have enough material to tuck underneath, allowing for the thickness of the padding. If the wood circle is 11 inches across, your material circle should be 18 inches.

Lay the padding on the wood and cover the padding with the material. Staple or tack the material to the bottom side of the wood, to make the cushion. Place the cushion on the bucket lid, and using the screws, attach the cushion to the bucket.

You have a padded seat that doubles as a bait bucket or other storage container. If you want, you can paint the bucket camouflage and have it do double duty as a hunting seat.

ANGLER



#### MATERIALS LIST

- PLASTIC BUCKET AND LID.
- PLYWOOD, AT LEAST  $\frac{3}{4}$ -INCH THICK, AT LEAST 24 INCHES BY 24 INCHES.
- PIECE OF FOAM-RUBBER PADDING.
- CLOTH COVERING.
- FOUR #6  $\frac{3}{4}$ -INCH FLATHEAD SCREWS



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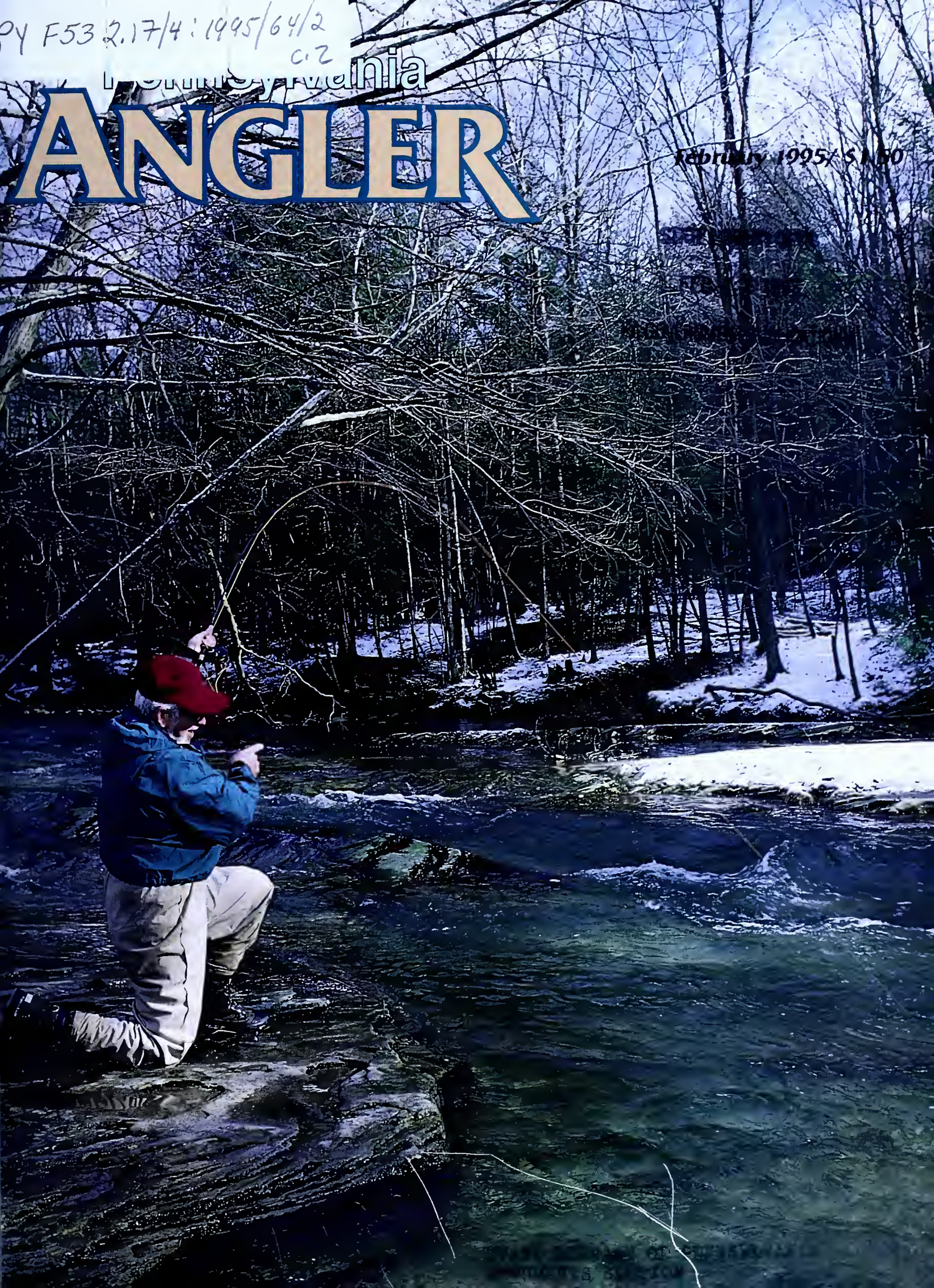


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# Straight Talk

## Accomplishments

The dawning of a new year often prompts the crafting of plans and dreams for the coming months. As an agency, we know, however, that when looking into the future it is not enough merely to map where we want to go. We must also look back on where we have been.

Sportsmen have always taken great interest in the programs offered by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, so I thought you might be interested in reviewing some 1994 accomplishments.

**Commissioners.** The Board of Commissioners held four quarterly meetings with staff members. These meetings were, as usual, open to the public. Commissioner Paul J. Mahon was elected president to replace James Biery, Jr., who died last May. Commissioner Gary Pflugfelder was chosen as vice president.

**Bureau of Fisheries.** Despite spring snowstorms, the catchable trout program was a success. Stocking rates and frequency of stocking individual waters were adjusted to reflect findings from the 1991 statewide trout angler telephone survey and angler use-and-harvest studies. In all, more than 5 million adult trout were stocked.

Also stocked were 100 million warmwater species, including fry, fingerlings and adults. The Commission often relies on cooperation with other states to acquire stocks needed for the warmwater program.

Angler use, harvest and opinion surveys were conducted on the Allegheny River, Lake Erie, the Juniata and Susquehanna rivers and on a section of Dunkard Creek in Greene County.

American shad restoration continued with video equipment installed in the newly opened fish passage facility at the Easton Dam recording seven dozen American shad ascending the Lehigh River. The Van Dyke Research Station

hatchery also reared and stocked almost 7 million fry and fingerling shad.

Use of triploid grass carp as an alternative tool in managing nuisance aquatic vegetation in ponds and lakes became a reality through a formal permitting process. Some 450 permits were issued.

Steelhead fishing in Lake Erie and tributaries was the best ever. Surveys showed that fish averaged more than 22 inches in length. More than 40 percent of the steelhead caught were released. Additionally, 1.1 million fingerlings were stocked.

**Property and Facilities Management.** Crews designed and constructed bird predation structures at several fish culture stations, including Huntsdale and Tionesta.

Construction work at Elizabeth Borough Access in Allegheny County was finished. The Deer Creek Access in Allegheny County was expanded and improved. Some 270 boat access sites located throughout the Commonwealth were maintained for free public use.

**Administrative Services.** More than one million fishing licenses were sold, along with 725,000 trout stamps.

The Federal Grants Section assisted program and project leaders throughout the Commission in obtaining more than \$6 million in funding.

**Boating.** A new high of 322,318 boats were registered—10,000 craft more than the previous record. Personal watercraft were the fastest growing classification of powerboats, with roughly 12,000 registered in the state. This represents a 25 percent increase over 1993 figures.

Approximately 7,900 boating safety certificates were issued. The year 1994 marked the first full year the Commission employed four full-time regional boating safety instructors.



**Peter A. Colangelo**

*Executive Director*

*Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*

**Law Enforcement.** Ten individuals graduated from Waterways Conservation Officer school last June 24 after 38 weeks of training.

WCO patrols resulted in over 30,000 warnings issued and over 10,000 citations for various violations of fish and boat laws and regulations. The 93 WCOs also attended hundreds of sportsmen's meetings and outdoor shows.

**Education and Information.** More than 3,000 children participated in the Commission's SMART Angler program. Some 30,000 children received classroom copies of the quarterly PLAY newsletter.

Some 1,900 Angler Recognition Program Awards were sent to anglers who caught trophy-sized fish.

More than a million pieces of printed material were produced and distributed.

To review more Commission accomplishments, please turn to the Commission's Annual Report, on page 7. Using these and other accomplishments as cornerstones, we will continue to build on our success in 1995.

*Peter A. Colangelo*



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*The issue's cover shows Pennsylvania angler Ron Poles working a trout on Fishing Creek, Columbia County.*

## Kids and sport shows

This is the season for outdoor shows. Take your kids. The different kinds of people, the variety of displays, the tackle, boats, gear and clothing bait kids to become outdoor people. Let the same yearning to be outdoors that overcomes you infect your children. You know that happens at sport shows.

When you take the kids, though, heed these suggestions to make the trip pleasant.

- Bring plenty of snacks and drinks. Kids get hungry fast, but your children might not want the soda and hotdogs commonly available, nor will they relish standing in long lines when they're hungry.

- Put heavy coats and other winter clothing in a backpack so that you and the kids can be comfortable. Uncomfortable kids move to crankiness quickly. A big backpack doubles as a storage area for catalogs, literature and other show goodies.

- When you enter the show, learn the locations of the restrooms fast. Some children can't seem to time these things, so you'll want to avoid frantic searches during the day, especially when shows become crowded. Take the kids to the restroom on arrival.

- Don't shop for major purchases with kids along. Kids need constant supervision at shows. Return to the show another day without the children to do your serious major-purchase comparisons and product evaluations.

- Forget the stroller. Kids see only everyone's knees in a stroller. Youngsters that require a stroller are too young for shows. Let 'em walk, and between walking periods, tote 'em in a front or back carrier.

- Pace yourself. You might see only a portion of the show before the kids tire.—Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.





# Lake Marburg

## GOLD

by Jeff Knapp

Lake Marburg is one of the most important fisheries in the southeastern portion of the state. The center of attraction of Cordorus State Park, York County, Lake Marburg has a reputation for harboring two important members of the perch family, walleyes and yellow perch—Lake Marburg gold.

Lake Marburg covers over 1,300 surface acres. The maximum depth is 102 feet, and the average depth is 39 feet. It is a steep-sided lake. Though extensive drawdowns in recent years have stymied plant growth, the lake has aquatic plant life, in the form of elodea, chara (muskgrass), and bushy pondweed. The water is clear.

Recently I spoke with Mike Kaufmann, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's Area 6 Fisheries Manager. I first asked Kaufmann to describe the current state of fishing pressure on Lake Marburg.

"It's a very intensively fished waterway. Even in the early spring, and we are used to doing surveys in the spring when the weather is still cold, there's a lot of people out fishing. That's unusual. We usually have most other lakes to ourselves."

The lake's reputation as one of quality has a lot to do with bringing in anglers from near and far.

"Harrisburg is one of the areas that people would come from, and there's a lot of people who come up from Maryland, as well as local anglers," notes Kaufmann.

Even though walleyes and yellow perch are closely related—both are members of the perch family—their status in Marburg is now different, though both have been, and in all likelihood will continue to be, important species there.

Generally speaking, the walleyes are numerous, but larger individuals are rare. Conversely, the perch are few and far between, for reasons you'll soon see, though some big perch continue to be caught.



"Both the walleyes and the perch reproduce very well in Lake Marburg," says Kaufmann. "There's no problem with reproduction in regard to walleyes—we don't even stock them in there. We haven't stocked them since about 1983. The reproduction is outstanding, and there's no need for stocking."

One of the important aspects concerning the health of any lake is its forage base, what the fish have to eat. This concerns anglers not only in regard to the size of fish that grow there, but in what to use to catch them. Kaufmann says things in Marburg are great from a forage standpoint.



“There’s an excellent forage base for both walleyes and perch. Obviously, perch provide forage for walleyes, but there’s also an abundant population of shiners in the lake. We have fatfin shiners, spotfin shiners and spottail shiners. We also have bluntnose minnows and killifish.”

## Walleyes

Walleyes are one of the main attractions of Marburg, so I asked Kaufmann if his management team has surveyed the lake recently, if they have a good handle on the status of the walleyes and perch population. The answer to my query was “yes.”

Kaufmann’s first observation regarded the effect fishing pressure has on the lake’s walleye population.

“The walleye population appears to be affected by fishing pressure in terms of the size distribution. For all the forage in there, and the rapid growth rates of the fish, most of the fish in the population that would interest anglers range between 15 inches up to 18 inches, with a sharp decline in numbers after you get to 18 inches.”

Kaufmann notes that some thought has been given to placing Lake Marburg under Conservation Lake regulations, which would limit walleye catches to two fish with a 20-inch minimum size.

Kaufmann referred to a survey done in 1993, one that backed up what anglers have been experiencing on the water, that Marburg currently has plenty of walleyes, but not many large walleyes.

“Of the fish we collected, out of the entire population, roughly 10 percent were 18 inches long. Then you drop down to two percent for 19 inches, two percent for 20 inches, then roughly one percent for each inch-group thereafter. That’s not the usual situation in walleye populations, where you see such a rapid decline in larger size groups. In fact, we had trouble recovering fish over 21 inches. We got a few, but not too many.

“We were there a bit early in 1993. The males were in the spawning areas, but the females were not. So we went back in 1994 to sample to see if that would give us any difference in size. Sometimes there’s a sexual difference between the sizes of the fish. If you only sample males you may not get a true representation of the size distribution in the population. Unfortunately, that wasn’t the case. We got only a few larger fish. Although we got a few females, they weren’t much longer than the males. It looks to us that what we saw in 1993 and 1994 is what you have there. Large numbers of fish up to about 18 inches, and then things drop off rapidly from there.”

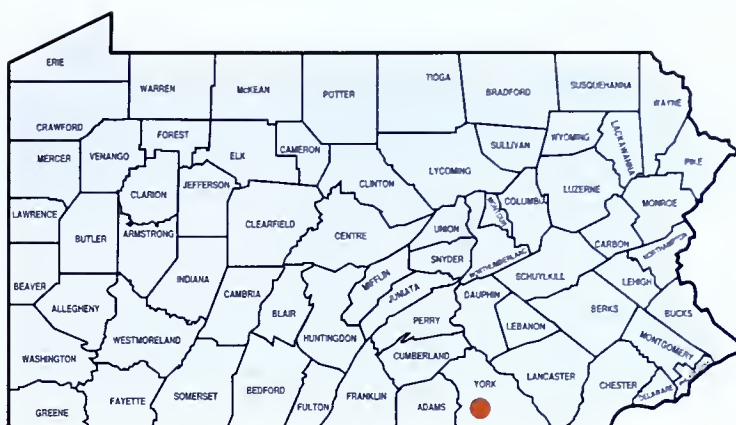
And the numbers of fish are impressive, which would further lead one to believe fishing pressure to be a limiting factor in the numbers of large walleyes.

“The walleye population is dense, but not dense enough to be stunted. They are there in very good numbers, catchable numbers. If I had a walleye density like that in most of my lakes, I’d be pretty happy. It’s just that the size distribution is not quite what you would like it to be.”

## Yellow perch

The flip side of the Marburg gold story is that of the perch. Unlike the walleye situation, Lake Marburg has the reputation of putting out jumbo perch, like the ones in Lake Wallenpaupack and Lake Erie.

Kaufmann’s surveys also examined the yellow perch population, and the news he has for anglers is that things will drop off for numbers of perch, but should improve within the next two to three years.



“What we anticipate this year, or next year, is that fishing for perch is going to go downhill, and there are going to be a lot of people who will be concerned about the quality of the perch fishing. It isn’t going to be what they are used to. It is going to be dominated by very few fish, and those fish are going to be small until the fish produced in 1993 get to the point where people start seeing them in their catches.”

The survey conducted in 1993 provided Kaufmann with the information needed to make this forecast.

“The 1993 survey apparently followed some years of poor reproduction. Unlike walleyes, the bulk of the catch was made up of large fish—not very many small fish. That suggested to us a problem with reproduction. We looked into the drawdown history of the lake and for a few years before that the lake had been drawn down tremendously, more than we had seen in the history of the lake. Also, it stayed down for a long period. That’s probably a good reason why perch reproduction would be depressed over that period. However, in the year we did that survey, 1993, the water level was up. Spawning that year was very good.”



photo-Jeff Knapp

*Lake Marburg has a reputation for producing big yellow perch.*



Drawdowns can adversely affect fish populations, particularly lengthy ones where the lake is lowered dramatically. I asked Kaufmann how the drawdowns affected yellow perch reproduction, while at the same time walleyes reproduced with great success.

"Walleyes spawn over gravel and shale, as well as the riprap along the dam breast and causeway. Basically, walleyes spread their eggs over a large area. They are not a nesting fish. They disperse their eggs over the substrate on the windward shore. So walleyes don't need aquatic plants or terrestrial plants to spread their eggs over.

"In the case of perch, they string their eggs over debris or plant life in the water, in long strands that appear somewhat like frog eggs. In the case of Marburg, when the lake is drawn down the substrate is barren. When it's drawn down far enough, even the aquatic plants are dried up. So what you end up with, if perch lay their eggs at all they are doing it on rocks, on muddy bottom, or on a shale or gravel bottom, and the eggs may not survive nearly as well as if suspended in the water column. With walleyes, if you draw the lake down, they just spawn farther out. They'll still have the same substrate."

Lake Marburg yellow perch anglers have been hammering the same fish for some time now, and it will be a while before things get back to the status they are accustomed to. Kaufmann explains:

"There's a couple of year classes of fish that anglers have been fishing over for a number of years now, because there's nothing behind them. There's nothing really coming on until the 1993 year class.

"By this year, those big fish, the ones that were 14, 13 and 12 inches, are probably going to be out of the population, or very close to that. There are very few fish coming up behind them. Generally speaking, if anglers find that the perch population is depressed, and they are not catching the size they are used to, that is to be expected. But they should be aware that there is a good year class from 1993, and they will be entering into the catchable size range very soon, and that should improve fishing once again."

Kaufmann says it takes three to four years for a Lake

Marburg yellow perch to reach 10 inches; four or five years to get to the foot-long range.

Like all aquatic systems, Lake Marburg is constantly changing.

Because lakes are not dormant, neither are the fisheries they provide. Still, the future for Lake Marburg gold is promising.



## New Threat to Lake Marburg

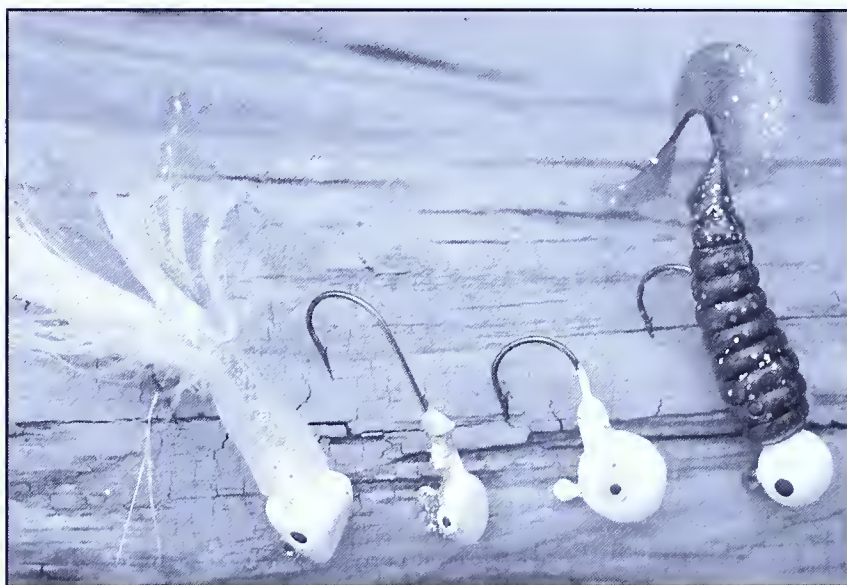
Mike Kaufmann has one serious concern regarding Lake Marburg: The discovery there of white perch.

"Anglers have introduced white perch into Lake Marburg. That has the potential to be a bad signal for fishing in the future. We've had great problems with other lakes in the Southeast Region where white perch have been introduced. The Commission does not stock these fish. The only reason they appear in some of our waters is because anglers have put them there. We've even heard rumors of bait stores selling white perch unbeknownst to the seller or buyer."

Kaufmann says there don't appear to be many white perch in Lake Marburg yet, and he hopes they don't get established. Other lakes in the region have suffered because of white perch.

"White perch are very prolific. They seem to be able to spawn successfully in almost any type of aquatic environment. They can then feed on the young of other fish species in the lake. Populations can explode.

"In the case of Lake Nockamixon in Bucks County, for instance, the white perch fed on just about everything they could feed on, which made the quality of the fishing go down. Then the white perch became stunted, and were too small to be of any interest to anglers. When we tried to stock walleyes, the white perch would feed heavily on the fingerlings we were stocking. They were a real nuisance. Finally, they got to the point where they just starved to death. Because they're stunted, their bodies became very thin in the fall, and over the winter of 1986-87, all the white perch died under the ice. Now the lake is in good shape."—JK.



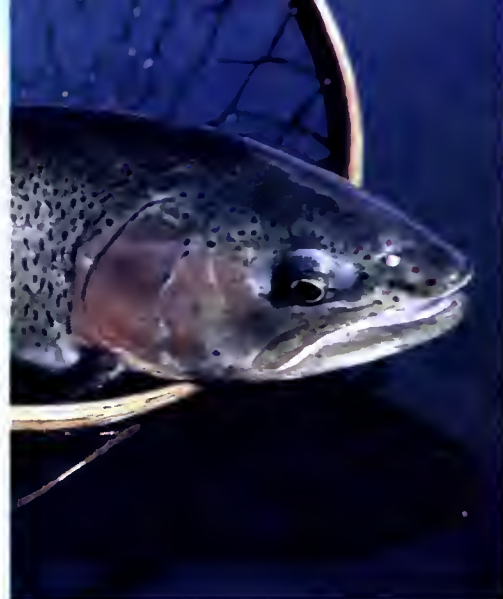
Good walleye bets: (top photo, left the right) Lipstick jig, Perfection jig, Fireball jig, Sinkin' Head jig with Power Grub. (bottom photo, left to right) Fireball jig with minnow, Fireball jig with Fuzz-E-Grub body, Sinkin' Head jig with Super Shad body, Sinkin' Head jig with Power Grub.



# Annual Report

## Fiscal Year 1993-94

(July 1993 Through June 1994)



### Bureau of Education & Information

- More than 30,000 children received classroom copies of the quarterly PLAY newsletter.
- Produced more than a million pieces of printed material.
- Printed all materials to assist Executive Office with strategic planning efforts.
- *Pennsylvania Angler* sent free to more than 1,150 libraries.
- Conducted 45 KARE (Keystone Aquatic Resource Education) workshops.
- Assisted Bureau of Fisheries with hosting annual "Open House" at Linesville Fish Culture Station.
- Prepared and distributed 59 news releases (24 statewide and 35 regional).
- Distributed 18,500 inseason stocking schedules.
- More than 3,000 children participated in the Commission's "SMART Angler" program.
- Sent more than 1,650 Angler Recognition Program awards to anglers who caught trophy-sized fish in Pennsylvania waters.
- Sent trout season video news releases to 22 television stations in Pennsylvania.

### Bureau of Fisheries

The 1994 spring catchable trout stocking program, despite the snowstorms of 1994, came off quite well. Stocking rates and frequency of stocking individual waters were adjusted to reflect findings from the 1991 statewide trout angler telephone survey and extensive angler use and harvest studies over a three-year period, with considerable input from a Commission-wide planning group.

Plans were created to stock stream sections to provide additional trout angling during the fall and winter months.

Waters were added to the Class A Wild Trout (unstocked) program as well as the delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only program.

Field investigations to update management plans (including stocking, regulations and habitat manipulation) were conducted on many stream and river sec-

tions, ponds, reservoirs and lakes throughout the Commonwealth.

Angler use, harvest, and opinion surveys were conducted on Pools 3 and 4 of the Allegheny River, the Juniata and Susquehanna rivers, and a section of Dunkard Creek, Greene County. Additional waters were added to special regulations programs.

Video equipment, installed in the newly opened fish passage facility at the Easton Dam, recorded some seven dozen American shad ascending the Lehigh River as the initial phase of restoration activity.

Use of Triploid Grass Carp as an alternative tool in managing nuisance aquatic vegetation in ponds and lakes became a reality through a formal permitting process.

The Lake Erie (and tributaries) steelhead fishery was the best ever. Fish averaged over 22 inches in length. More than 40 percent of the steelhead caught were released. Some 42,000 were harvested.

The 12-month Lake Erie (including Presque Isle Bay and tribs) angler use, harvest and opinion study was completed. Over 9,000 anglers were interviewed.

The Van Dyke Research Station hatched, reared and stocked almost 7 million fry and fingerling American shad.

Conowingo fish lifts captured 37,000 (a new record) American shad coming into the Susquehanna River system.

Joint research among Commission biologists and the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Unit at Penn State aimed at documenting survival of hatchery-stocked fry and fingerling walleyes.



### Bureau of Property and Facilities Management

- Completed upper half of Huntsdale Fish Culture Station bird predation project.
- Designed and began construction of bird predation structure for Tionesta Fish Culture Station.
- Completed design and first bid phase of Tylersville Fish Culture Station renovation.
- Completed construction of Elizabeth Borough Access in Allegheny County.
- Completed construction of parking and access drives for Deer Creek Access, Allegheny County. Designed and began construction of launch ramp.
- Began reconstruction of Fords Lake, Lackawanna County.

### Bureau of Boating

Total number of registered boats:	321,754
Personal watercraft	12,000
New boat registrations	20,000
Unpowered boats	33,000
Boating safety certificates issued	7,900
Water rescue personnel trained (1993)	1,200
Total number trained	12,000
Total number of boating safety instructors:	
Boating and Water Safety Awareness	345
Basic Boating	409
Water Rescue	280
School districts, recreation departments receiving grant assistance for:	
Boating and Water Safety Course 12 Boating Safety Handbook (printed and distributed)	250,000
Films, videos distributed	456
Boating accidents reported:	
Property damage	\$300,000
Injuries	79
Fatalities	15
Aids to navigation deployed	1,800



# Annual Report

**Fiscal Year 1993-94**

(July 1993 Through June 1994)

## Bureau of Law Enforcement

• We conducted another Waterways Conservation Officer School with 10 students graduating June 24 at the Capitol in Harrisburg. These officers were assigned to work in various patrol districts in the region in which they reside until such time as a permanent district is available through normal attrition such as retirements and transfers.

• Only one retirement took place. Conservation Officer Scobel, Butler County, during the fiscal year. However, 10 or more others could occur by the end of the calendar year.

• Officers still place much emphasis on the preservation of water quality by reviewing stream encroachment applications and investigating many pollutions. Other special law enforcement operations include the detection and apprehension of persons operating boats under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

• Normal fish and boat patrols resulted in over 30,000 warnings issued and over 10,000 people cited for various infractions of laws and regulations.

• Waterways Conservation Officers continue to be the public's main source of contact with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Officers have much one-on-one contact during their routine patrols and still attend hundreds of sportsmen's meetings and a variety of boat and outdoor shows.



## Fishing License Section

Fishing licenses issued in fiscal year 1993-94 include:

Resident	943,853
Non-resident	66,496
Senior resident	21,972
Tourist	13,917
Senior lifetime	14,956
Free	1,260
Trout stamps	724,902
Total	1,787,356

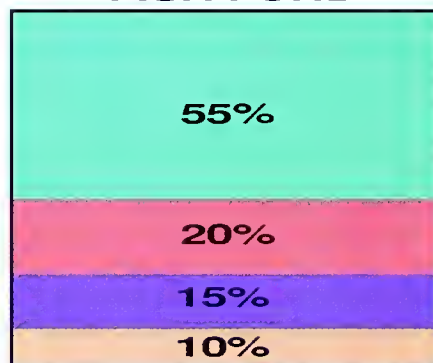
## Federal Grants Section

The Federal Grants Section assisted program and project leaders throughout

the Commission in the preparation and submission of formal documentation for federal assistance on six new projects and eight new project segments. Federal agencies that participate in Commission projects include the Department of the Interior, Department of Commerce, Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Transportation. The total revenue received for all federal projects was \$6,056,092. Revenue was distributed as follows:

Fish Fund	\$4,817,274
Boat Fund	\$1,238,818
Total	\$6,056,092

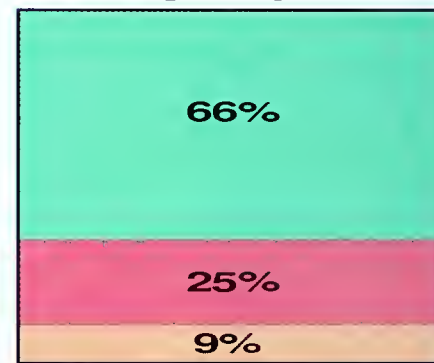
### FISH FUND



TOTAL FISH FUND REVENUE \$24,342,840.00

FISHING LICENSES	13,469,567.00
FEDERAL AID/AUGMENTATIONS	4,905,517.00
TROUT/SALMON PERMITS	3,624,510.00
MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE	2,343,246.00

### FISH FUND



TOTAL EXPENDITURES AND COMMITMENTS \$26,567,518.00

SALARIES, WAGES, BENEFITS	17,535,741.00
OPERATIONAL EXPENSES/GRANTS AND SUBSIDIES	6,520,254.00
FIXED ASSETS	2,511,523.00

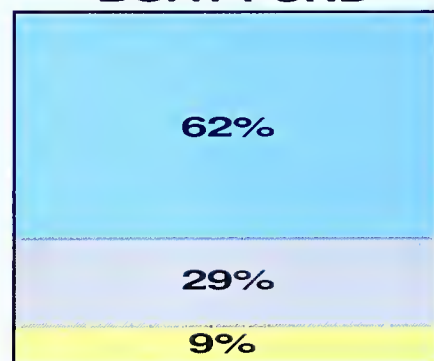
### BOAT FUND



TOTAL BOAT FUND REVENUE \$7,886,039.00

BOAT REGISTRATIONS	4,092,733.00
FED LIO FUEL TAX REIMBURSE	1,998,411.00
AUGMENTATIONS	1,264,667.00
MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE	530,228.00

### BOAT FUND



TOTAL EXPENDITURES AND COMMITMENTS \$7,570,000.00

SALARIES, WAGES, BENEFITS	4,702,824.00
OPERATIONAL EXPENSES/GRANTS AND SUBSIDIES	2,224,848.00
FIXED ASSETS	642,328.00



# Pennsylvania's TOP 10 Trout Streams

by Charles R. Meck

How in the world do you decide which streams in the state qualify as one of the top 10? Which criteria do you use to determine their status? And if you place it in the top 10, won't such notoriety bring added pressure to the stream? What makes a Keystone stream one of the top 10? I always ask the following questions:

- Does the stream hold an ample number of trout over the entire season?
- Does the stream hold a variety of hatches spread out over the entire season?
- Do water temperatures hold up well throughout the season?

Some of my favorite streams in Pennsylvania flow in northcentral Pennsylvania. The First Fork of the Sinnemahoning, Kettle, Loyalsock, and Pine creeks have fantastic hatches and offer great early season trout fishing. On any one of the three you'll see green drakes, brown drakes, hendricksons, blue quills and dozens of other fantastic hatches. Fish any of these waterways only in April and May and you'd rate them as some of the best.

But travel to any of these freestone streams after early June and you might find a thermal problem. I've seen temperatures on Pine and Loyalsock creeks rise into the 80s and stay there for days. At that time I saw only smallmouth bass feeding. You will, however, see streambred and hold-over trout in the upper reaches of all four streams. From the catch-and-release section upstream on Kettle Creek I've caught trout all summer long. From West Pike upstream, Pine Creek holds an ample trout population. The First Fork above Wharton also holds some holdover and streambred trout. But the lower ends of these big freestone streams lose their trout populations quickly in any expanded heat wave.

For example, when the water temperature on Pine Creek rises above 70 degrees, I've seen hundreds of fish migrate up to the first few large holding pools on Cedar Run.

Any list of the top 10 streams has to be subjective—those streams that hold fond memories for me. Maybe a stream should be included even if I have not done well on it. To help me be more objective, I've selected anglers in the state who have fished a wide variety of streams and asked them to supply their list of the top 10. Angler like Craig Josephson of Johnstown and Paul Antolosky of Bellefonte fish trout streams all over



**If I see too many cars parked in an area, I avoid that area at all cost. We, as concerned anglers, have a responsibility not to overcrowd a stream.**

the state. Craig, Paul and I agree on five of the top streams, but not on the other five. We all agree that streams like Spring Creek, the Little Juniata River, Penns Creek, Fishing Creek and the Delaware River should be ranked in the top five.



# Pennsylvania's TOP 10 Trout Streams

What about bringing too much pressure to a stream? Here's where you as a concerned angler enter the picture. First, respect the landowner's property. If I see too many cars parked in an area, I avoid that area at all cost. Recently someone asked me for a list of streams where he could

take a busload of fly fishers. The last thing I want to see on a stream is a bus carrying 20 to 30 anglers unloading in front of me. You, as a concerned angler, have a responsibility not to overcrowd a stream.

## Penns Creek

Penns Creek reflects the epitome of a top trout stream. It holds hatches from early spring to late fall and a great supply of streambred brown trout. But Penns Creek has some problems in its lower reaches. After mid-June it's not uncommon to see water temperatures in the high 70s in the Cherry Run section.

Hatches begin early on this picturesque limestone stream. Just after the season opens in April, anglers fish a great downwing hatch. This large caddis fly, copied by a size 10 Grannom, produces some exciting fishing even as water temperatures just rise to the mid-50s.

Talk about hatches, Penns Creek has all the major ones. When fly fishers think of the green drake, most think of Penns Creek. When this hatch appears in late May or early June, it often brings some of the lunker browns to the surface.

Along with the drake hatch you'll find hundreds of anglers vying for space to fly fish. If they only realized that they could avoid Penns Creek at that time and fish one of more than 50 other streams that also host fishable green drake hatches!

Two weeks after the drake hatch has ended, a blue-winged olive hatch appears daily for more than two weeks. If you fish in the evening you'll find thousands of mating adults, dark-olive spinners, returning to deposit eggs. You'll also see few fly fishers at this time.

I recently fished a section of Penns Creek just above Cherry Run during the green drake hatch. In one evening in early June I caught more than 20 trout—some up to 18 inches long. A combination of Gray Fox, Green Drake, and Patriot patterns took most of these streambred browns.

The Commission recently stopped stocking Penns from Coburn downstream. You'll find almost four miles of catch-and-release water on the lower end of Penns Creek.

The flow of Elk and Pine creeks are critical to Penns Creek below. These vital tributaries enter Penns at the town of Coburn and keep the mainstem viably cool trout water for miles.

## Fishing Creek

If you've fly fished on Clinton County's Fishing Creek, you already know that it gets an extreme amount of fishing pressure. Fish when the green drake hatch appears in early June to mid-June and you'll fish with dozens of other anglers nearby.

I enjoy fly fishing the "narrows" section above Lamar. The Commission has designated this five-mile section trophy trout water. If you hit the stream in mid-April and late April, you're almost guaranteed to fish over a hatch every day. On some occasions I have fished over five hatches on an early spring trip. I've seen little blue wings, blue quills, quill gordons and hendricksons. Add a caddis fly to the foursome and you know you can probably see some rising trout.

Like the Little Juniata River and Penns Creek, Fishing Creek



photo-Barry & Cathy Beck

also holds a robust green drake hatch. Fishing Creek's hatch, however, appears a week or more later than the other two. All three streams get an army of fly fishers for this huge hatch. Ask Craig Josephson of Johnstown how much fishing pressure Fishing Creek receives during the green drake hatch. Last year during the hatch, Craig said he had about 20 feet between anglers in an upper section of the narrows.



But there's great fishing on this cold limestone all the way downstream to Mill Hall. Here you'll find great midsummer blue quill and trico hatches and fewer anglers.

## Spring Creek

What courageous attempts this central Pennsylvania limestone stream has made to gain its former preeminence! During the past few decades this fabled stream has received chemicals and nutrients that would have condemned a normal stream to oblivion. Not Spring Creek! The stream now holds a fine supply of streambred brown trout in its entire length.

Hatches have returned slowly and the sulphur, light cahill and trico make up three of the more common flies. The sulphur usually appears from mid-May until mid-June. You can readily tell when the hatch appears on Spring Creek—it brings hordes of fly fishers to the stream. Because of the number of anglers fishing the sulphur hatch in the latter part of May, I avoid the stream at that time. Tricos begin appearing in mid-July to late July and continue to appear every morning until late September.

You'll find good fly fishing from Lemont downstream to Milesburg where Spring Creek enters the lower Bald Eagle. The Fisherman's Paradise section, about four miles above Bellefonte, holds an ample trout population, but the area receives heavy angling pressure. The entire stream has been designated a no-kill zone.

## Little Juniata River

Talk about a checkered past, the Little Juniata River has had one. Until the late 1960s this river spewed forth dark-brown tannic-laden waters. Even though it held trout and some hatches at the time, few anglers fished it.

But the river made a valiant comeback in the early 1970s—returned to a viable top-notch trout river in the state. As it recovered the Little Juniata River added dozens of new hatches. In the early 1970s it held some sulphurs, light cahills and yellow drakes. Now the river boasts more than two dozen prolific hatches, including a terrific green drake hatch around Memorial Day.

As the popularity of this great river grew, so did the angling pressure. Back in 1972 you could easily catch 20 to 30 good-sized trout. Now the number and size have diminished considerably. At any rate, the river continues to return and the planted fingerlings show excellent growth.

Don't overlook late summer and early fall fly fishing on the river. You'll find a decent white fly hatch in late August and early September and little blue-winged olives and slate drakes in September.

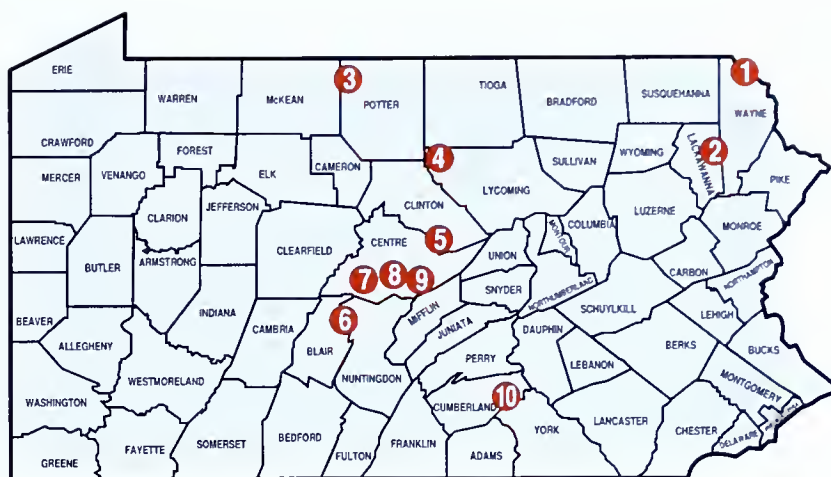
## Yellow Breeches Creek

Fish this great southcentral limestone stream in mid-August to late August and you'll find hordes of anglers crowding every pool and riffle. That's the time local anglers fly fish over the great white fly hatch. The hatch appears for more than two weeks just at dusk.

But the Breeches holds more than just one hatch. In April anglers find matching-the-hatch opportunities with the likes of hendricksons, little blue-winged olives and tan caddis flies.

The Yellow Breeches experiences fishing pressure almost every day of the season. If you have fly fished near the popular Allenberry resort in Boiling Springs on any day of the season, you'll see anglers—often dozens of anglers—vying for any available fishing spaces.

Recently in late June, Don Dunbar, Craig Josephson, Bryan



## Pennsylvania's Top 10 Trout Streams

1. Delaware River
2. Lackawanna River
3. Oswayo Creek
4. Slate Run
5. Fishing Creek
6. Little Juniata River
7. Spring Creek
8. Elk Creek
9. Penns Creek
10. Yellow Breeches Creek

Meck and I fished the Breeches. Even at that late date we caught trout in the catch-and-release area. But within a 200-yard section of the Breeches we saw more than eight anglers fly fishing.

## Delaware River

Fishing on the Delaware River without a hatch can frustrate even the most skilled fly fisher. This large tailwater gives up its trout often only very begrudgingly. But add a hatch to the river, match that hatch, and you're in for some fantastic trout fishing. Thankfully, the river holds plenty of hatches—from the hendrickson and little blue-winged olive in April to the trico and slate drake in September and October.

Late May and early June present the best opportunities to fish for the huge rainbows on this great river. In a week or two you find hatches like the blue-winged olive, green drake, brown drake and gray fox sulphur. You'll find great fly fishing from the New York border to the north, downriver to Callicoon.

Be careful if you plan to fish the upper Delaware. You'll find only a few access points—much of the river holds "no trespassing" signs. You'll find access to the upper part of the river via state game lands and the Commission's Balls Eddy Access, and another one, the Commission's Buckingham Access, three miles north of Equinunk. Anglers have found that drifting from a boat presents an effective way to fish the river.

## Lackawanna River

Is the Lackawanna River a top stream in Pennsylvania? Jim Misiura will tell you how great this river has become. Jim has fished the river for the past 10 years and has seen his share of lunker brown trout. He's caught trout over 20 inches long.

Hatches have slowly returned to this once-polluted river. In July and August, at the Archbald baseball field, you'll even see some trico spinners appearing overhead in the morning. If this hatch becomes heavier as the cleanup of the river progresses,



fly fishers could have some great matching-the-hatch activity in late summer.

Still, late May presents the best time to hit the Lackawanna. Sulphurs, tan caddises and gray foxes emerge in sporadic numbers and provide some opportunities to fly fish over rising trout. The Commission recently designated a 5.2-mile stretch from Archbald to Olyphant as trophy trout water.

Water temperatures and water levels remain fairly comfortable throughout the season.

## Oswayo Creek

Just 15 miles north of Coudersport you'll find a top-notch 30-foot to 50-foot wide freestone stream, Oswayo Creek. Oswayo boasts a good streambred brown trout population and great hatches throughout the entire fishing season. In April, blue quills, quill gordons and hendricksons are plentiful and bring trout to the surface. By late May, green and brown drakes compete for attention from the lunker trout. Even into late June, you'll see trout rising to a more sporadic yellow drake hatch.

In its upper reaches, where the Oswayo flows through fertile farmland, you'll find a trico hatch every morning from late July into early September. Oswayo doesn't give up its streambred brown trout easily. When a hatch occurs, however, you will find streambred browns in the three-pound to four-pound class.

PA 44 takes you to the lower end near Shinglehouse. If you

**Just 15 miles north of Coudersport you'll find a top-notch freestone stream, Oswayo Creek. Oswayo boasts a good streambred brown trout population and great hatches throughout the entire fishing season.**

prefer a smaller open stream flowing through farmland, PA 244 takes you to the upper end.

## Elk Creek

This central Pennsylvania limestone holds a fine number of streambred brown and brook trout. Elk hasn't seen stocked trout for more than a decade and is none the worse for it. Fish this cold 30-foot to 40-foot-wide stream in late April and you'll fish over trout rising to hendricksons and blue quills. But the best time to fish a hatch on Elk occurs in late May when the sulphurs appear.

Vince Gigliotti, Bryan Meck and I have witnessed mid-May sulphur hatches on a cool, cloudy day that continued from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Trout rose continuously to the almost unending supply of food. You can almost guarantee you'll see sulphurs appearing on Elk Creek every evening in late May.

Elk empties into Penn's Creek at the town of Coburn. Some stretches of the stream hold a respectable trico hatch.

## Slate Run

You'll find one of the finest freestone streams in the state emptying into Pine Creek at the town with the same name. Slate Run flows through picturesque mountains and boasts fantastic water like the Manor Pool and others.

Slate holds all the early season hatches like quill gordons, blue quills and hendricksons. Fish on the fabled water in late April and you'll likely see two or three hatches appear during the same afternoon.

You'll find terrific streambred brown trout and some hefty native brookies in the main stream and its tributaries. It's well worth the hike into this highly productive northcentral Pennsylvania freestone stream just for the scenery. Fish some of the deep pools formed by rocks and ledges and highly productive riffles and you know why this stream holds a special place in many fly fishermen's hearts. Any brightly colored streambred trout you catch is an added bonus.

## Top Streams of Pennsylvania and the Hatches You'll See

	Penns	Spring	Fishing Creek	Elk	Little Juniata River	Oswayo	Slate Run	Lackawanna	Delaware	Yellow Breeches
Quill Gordon	3		2			2	2			
Hendrickson	3		1	2		1	1	3	1	2
Blue Quill	2		1	2		2	2		2	2
Sulphur	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1
Light Cahill	2	2	2		2	3		4		
Green Drake	1		1	3	1	2	2		1	
Slate Drake	2		2		2	2	2		3	3
Brown Drake						3			2	
Blue-Winged Olive	1	3	2	2	2	2	3		2	2
March Brown/Gray Fox	2		2		2	3	2	2	2	3
Trico	4	2	2	2	4	2	2	3	2	2
White Fly					2				2	2

1 = MAJOR 2 = HEAVY 3 = MINOR 4 = PRESENT



# The Caterpillar as a Dry Fly

by Chauncy K. Lively

photos by the author

Caterpillars are the larvae of the many Lepidoptera species that comprise moths and butterflies. Even though the adults of these insects are generally much admired for their beauty and value as pollinators, the larvae may be very destructive to cultivated plants, to such stored foods as flour, meal and grain; and to fabrics. Certain caterpillars emit an unpleasant odor when disturbed, and a few others have body hairs capable of inflicting a sting or skin irritation to handlers. However, most may be handled without harm despite the menacing appearance of a few. Physically, caterpillars vary widely. Some are hairy, others are hairless, and still others are spiny. A plentiful food supply for young birds and predaceous insects, when waterborne they are often taken by fish.

The literature of fly fishing makes many references to patterns representing caterpillars. The Woolly Worm and Woolly Bugger, together with their many variants, come immediately to mind, and these are well-known to most fly fishers. Fished wet, they consistently account for many fish and their popularity is easily understood. As dry flies, caterpillars appear to rate fewer patterns. Nonetheless, those such as the Inch Worm have many advocates.

I tied a caterpillar pattern for my six-year-old grand-daughter, an avid bluegill fly fisher, and with it she caught so many 'gills the fly became known as "Lizzie's Special." I had wanted to come up with a floating pattern and knew I would have to find a more buoyant body material than the chenille used in the Woolly Worm and Woolly Bugger.

Quite a few years ago I dressed a caterpillar pattern with a body of spun deer hair, trimmed to shape, and palmer hackled from rear to front. It was a good fish-getter but it had—at least, for me—a major drawback. Dressing it was tedious and time-consuming. With the present pattern I had the luxury of selecting from several modern materials with superior buoyancy. I chose evasote, or Fly Foam, as it's sometimes called, and it proved to be a good choice.

Evasote comes in sheets about 1/8-inch thick and I found I could cut a strip 1/4-inch wide, lay it lengthwise on the shank



and bind it firmly in spaced turns to form a segmented, wormlike body. It was feather-light, at least as buoyant as spun deer hair, and ridiculously easy to dress. And because the body furnished the requisite ability to float, the use of expensive genetic hackle wasn't required to provide flotation. So I opted to palmer-hackle the pattern with a large neck or saddle hackle of less sophisticated origin and with barbuless pre-trimmed to the appropriate size. With a light application of fly dressing, it floats very well.

With some experimentation, I learned that Lizzie's Special may also be fished wet. Evasote is generally known as a "closed cell" foam. However, I found that when the fly is submerged and the foam body is gently squeezed, a small amount of moisture is absorbed by the foam as it is slowly released. This adds a modicum of weight to the fly—not enough to sink it deeply, but sufficient to break the surface film. Of course, weight may be added to the leader if deeper sinking is required.

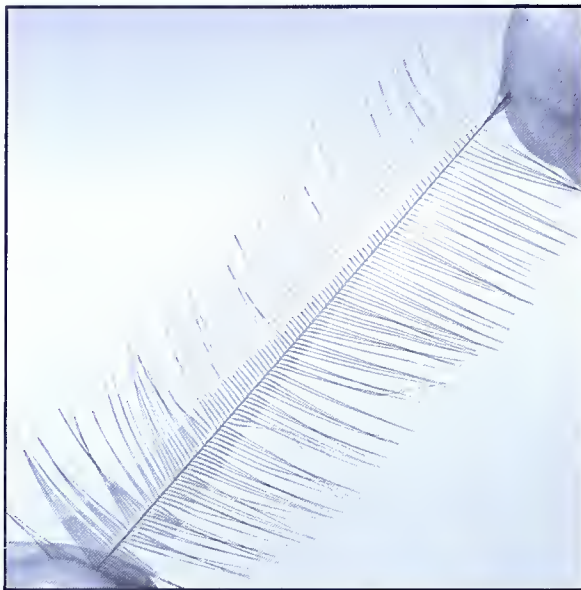
For bluegills I dress Lizzie's Special on a size 12, 2X long, fine-wire dry fly hook, such as Mustad's 94831 or Tiemco's 5212. The fly is sufficiently large to interest big bluegills, but it's an overly large mouthful for the pesky juveniles.

In addition to the yellow body/brown hackle version shown here, I also dress the pattern with a black body/grizzly hackle and green body/dun hackle. Caterpillars come in many color combinations, and the tier is limited only by his own imagination.

After repeatedly watching the enthusiasm with which pond bluegills came to Lizzie's namesake fly, I became curious to find how trout would react to it. Soon afterward, I fished the yellow/brown version along undercut banks in a favorite stream, and the trout took it with the same noisy eagerness they show 'hoppers. It was gratifying and prompted me to look ahead to next spring, when I'll have plans for a black/grizzly Lizzie's Special if the gypsy moth caterpillars are again plentiful.

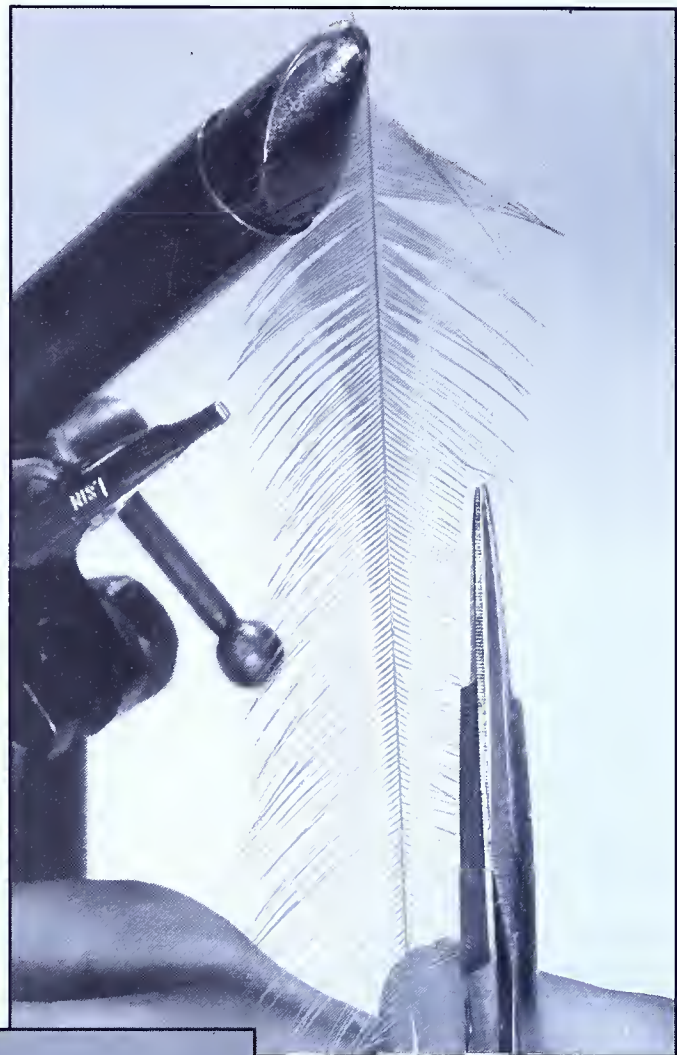


# The Caterpillar as a Dry Fly

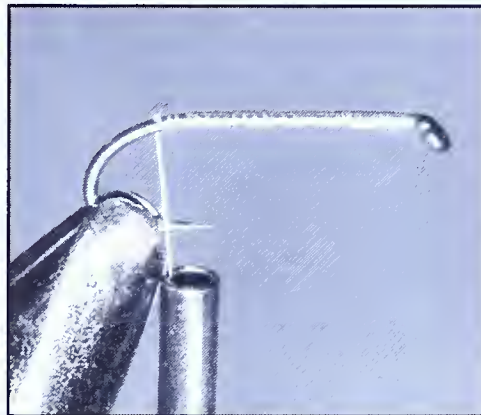


**1** Hold a large brown hackle by its tip and stroke downward along the rib, causing the barbs to stand out at right angles.

**2** Clamp the hackle butt in the vise and hold the tip under light tension. Trim the barbs on the right side of the rib slightly longer than the hook's gape. Turn the hackle over and trim the other side.



**3** Secure the hook in the vise and tie in the thread behind the eye. Wind in close turns back to the bend.

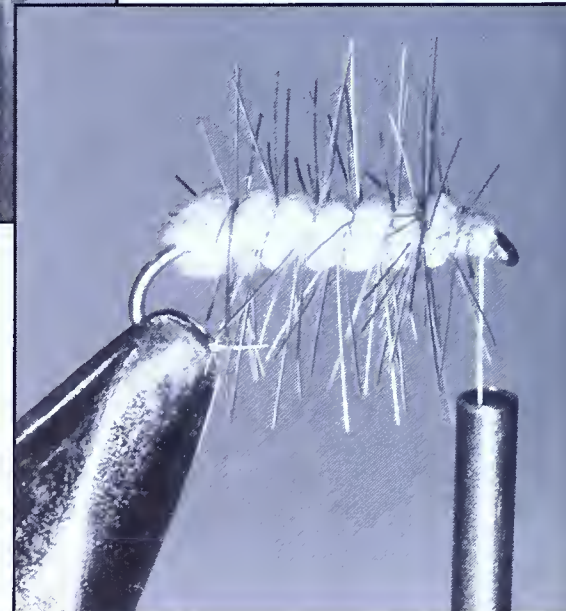


**4** Cut a strip of foam 1/4-inch wide and slightly longer than the shank. Tie in the foam at the bend with a 1/8-inch overhang. Tie in the hackle by its tip at the foam tie-in. Trim the excess hackle tip.



**5** Center the foam over the shank and hold it in place with your right hand. Firmly wind the thread forward in spaced turns, forming segments. Tie off behind the eye and trim the excess.

**6** Wind the hackle over the spaced thread winds and tie off behind the eye. Trim the excess, whip finish and lacquer the head.



## Dressing: Lizzie's Special

**Hook:** Size 12, 2X long, fine wire.

**Thread:** 6/0 yellow prewaxed.

**Body:** Strip of yellow evasote 1/4-inch wide.

**Hackle:** Large brown neck or saddle hackle, trimmed to size.



# 14 Northwest Pennsylvania Crappie Hotspots

by Darl Black



*Catching crappies doesn't require fancy tackle, crappies are scrappy fighters, they bite year-round, and they make excellent table fare.*

photo-Darl Black

Crappies are among the most sought-after fish in our state. In northwest Pennsylvania, crappies rank right up there with bass and walleyes in popularity.

Why the intense interest in crappies? Five solid reasons: Catching crappies does not require a lot of fancy equipment; crappies are scrappy fighters on light tackle; crappies bite year-round; crappies are excellent eating; and finally, most crappie anglers in the northwest need to travel no more than a few miles to be on productive crappie water.

According to one national survey, the average size for crappies across the U.S. is 8 to 10 inches long. Personally, I consider 10 inches a "decent" crappie, and anything over 12 inches "very respectable." Northwest Pennsylvania has a number of waters capable of producing crappies bigger than 10 inches.

There are also some waters with lots of crappies but with very few over 8 or 9 inches. These lakes suffer from small-crappie syndrome. Two possible explanations are offered. First, harvest is so high that fish are cropped off before reaching

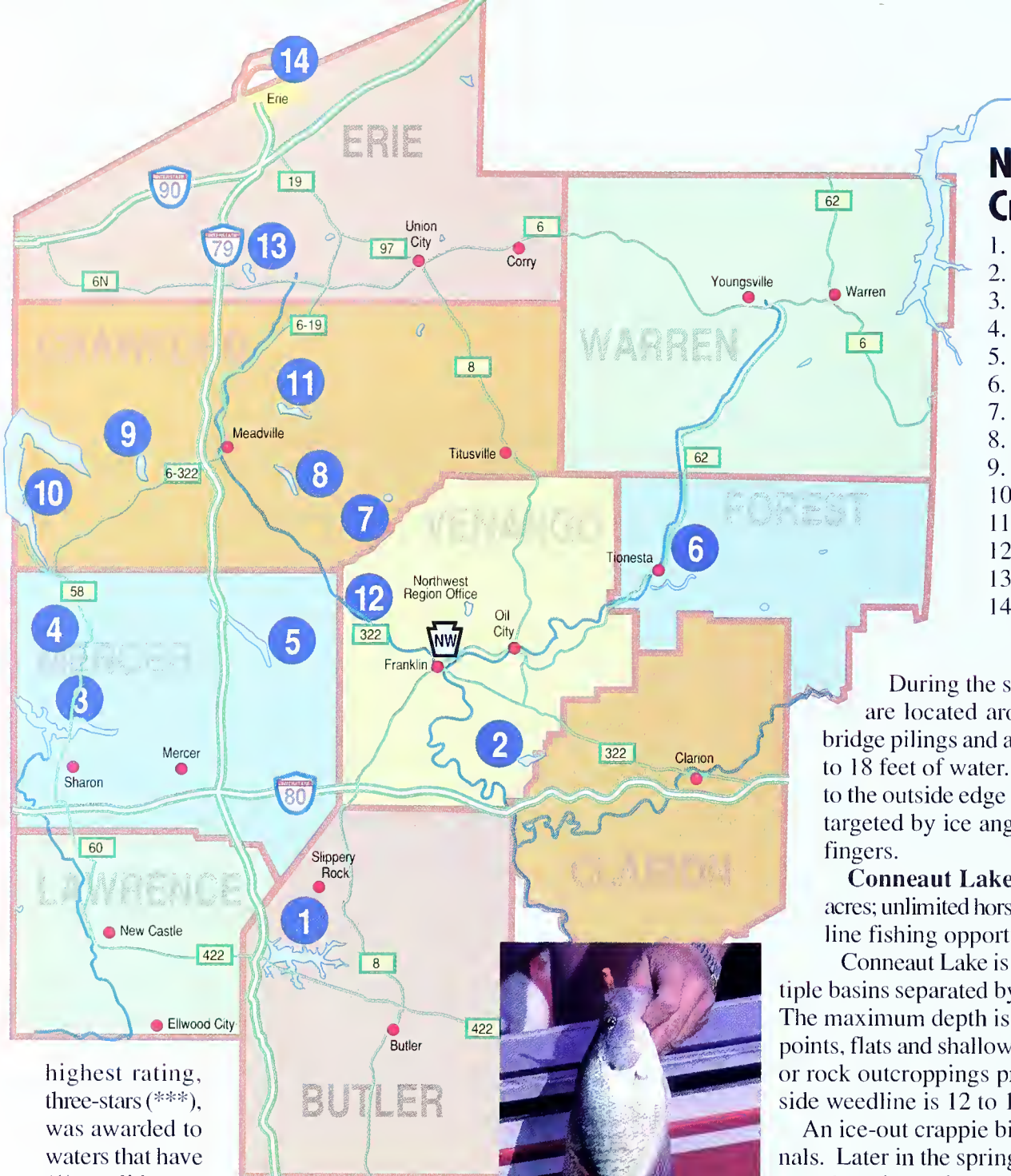
a quality size. Second, while spawning habitat is quite suitable, the lakes lack abundant and varied food sources needed for crappies to develop and grow.

There is a risk when it comes to rating crappie fishing for different waters. As any fisheries biologist can tell you, all fish populations are cyclic, based on the success of the spawn, availability of forage, and in some cases, angler harvest. However, crappies have more drastic variations than other species because they can go from very high populations to mediocre populations in a short time—perhaps as short a period as one or two fishing seasons.

Prediction risks aside, here are 14 of the best crappie waters in northwest Pennsylvania. The selections are based on input from reliable sources: Commission Area Fisheries Managers (AFMs) Ron Lee and Craig Billingsley, reports from knowledgeable anglers, and personal experience.

The rating system is subjective, of course. Consideration is given to the apparent strength of the crappie population, the average size of the fish, and access to the water. The





## Northwest PA Crappie Hotspots

1. Lake Arthur
2. Kahle Lake
3. Shenango Lake
4. Shenango River
5. Lake Wilhelm
6. Tionesta Lake
7. Sugar Lake
8. Tamarack Lake
9. Conneaut Lake
10. Pymatuning Lake
11. Woodcock Creek Lake
12. French Creek
13. Edinboro Lake
14. Presque Isle Bay

During the summer and early fall, crappies are located around manmade brushpiles, on bridge pilings and along creek channel edges in six to 18 feet of water. Some summer crappies relate to the outside edge of weedbeds, too. Crappies are targeted by ice anglers in the bays and shallower fingers.

**Conneaut Lake (\*\*)**—Crawford County; 928 acres; unlimited horsepower; two public ramps; shoreline fishing opportunities very restricted.

Conneaut Lake is a glacial-created lake with multiple basins separated by submerged ridges and humps. The maximum depth is 70 feet. Vegetation covers the points, flats and shallow humps, except where sandbars or rock outcroppings prevent weed growth. The outside weedline is 12 to 14 feet deep.

An ice-out crappie bite takes place in the feeder canals. Later in the spring, crappies appear at other protected sections of the main lake. After spawning, most crappies are found relating to the deep weed edge until mid-summer, at which time crappies move to off-shore structure. Late-fall crappie fishing is outstanding with fish hanging in 20 to 35 feet of water on points

and rock-capped humps.

**Edinboro Lake (\*\*\*)**—Erie County; 240 acres; unlimited horsepower; one public ramp; restricted shoreline fishing.

Although not recommended by the AFM because it has not been surveyed lately, Edinboro is currently providing exceptional crappie fishing. One August day this past season, a friend caught 50 crappies with 15 at least 11 inches in length.

Edinboro is a relatively shallow natural lake. A dam was built on the outflow to raise the water level. Inundated stumps plus vegetation provide important cover for crappies. Shallow canals at the north end of the lake host hungry crappies shortly after ice-out. Look for summertime crappies in open pockets in deeper vegetation and around deeper stumps. A typical depth would be five to 12 feet. Although the maximum lake depth is 30 feet, stratification limits pH and oxygen favorable to crappies to less than 14 feet in the summer. Crappies move deeper after turnover, and then turn up in the canals again during ice fishing season.

highest rating, three-stars (\*\*\*) was awarded to waters that have (1) a solid crappie population with fairly consistent catches each year, (2) decent average size with a good chance for crappies 10 inches and over, (3) shoreline access for fishing as well as good boat ramps. However, even a one star water (\*) is worth a visit.

**Lake Arthur (\*\*\*)**—Butler County; 3,200 acres; 10 hp limit; seven ramps; in Moraine State Park, providing ample shoreline fishing.

In an attempt to increase the average size of crappies, in the 1980s, Lake Arthur was placed under Conservation Lakes regulations, which limited daily crappie harvest to 10 fish. However, angler input resulted in Arthur being switched to the Big Bass Program in 1992, thus returning the crappie daily creel limit to 50 fish.

Lake Arthur looks like a sprawled hand with lake arms extending as fingers of the hand. Shallow-water cover includes vegetation and submerged wood (stumps, deadfalls, beaver lodges, brushpiles). Arthur, with a maximum depth of 35 feet, has an abundance of offshore structure including creek channels, roadbeds and bridge abutments. The chief forage is alewife, an open-water baitfish similar to gizzard shad. Adult crappies eat young-of-the-year alewife, as well as other minnows.





**French Creek (\*)**—Erie, Crawford, Venango counties; 80 miles; shallow riffles restrict motorboats to a few deeper pool areas; eight public access sites for cartop boats with additional shore access granted through private property.

French Creek is often overlooked as a crappie fishing hotspot. Far from evenly distributed, crappies are restricted to certain sections of the river. My own success is limited to late winter and spring when crappies are pushed into specific backwater areas, like the mouth of Conneaut Creek just below Cambridge Springs. Summer crappies on French Creek remain a mystery to me, although a few anglers know which deep rocky eddies hold the fish.

**Kahle Lake (\*)**—Clarion County; 253 acres; electric motors; two ramps; Commission lake with ample shoreline access.

AFM Ron Lee places Kahle Lake on his list of recommended waters because it has produced a few quality crappies in his survey nets. Kahle is very popular with local anglers, but does not see a lot of out-of-town fishermen because it is off main highways. The water is fairly clear and vegetation covers the flats to about 12 feet. Some stumps can be found in the deeper water along the creek channel. During the summer, crappies are found among sparse weeds in the 8- to 14-foot range.

**Presque Isle Bay (\*\*\*)**—Erie County; 3,840 acres; unlimited horsepower; four ramps in Presque Isle State Park on the

*A jig-and-minnow combination is a productive crappie lure almost anywhere.*



peninsula; ample shoreline fishing opportunities in Pennsylvania's most visited state park.

The main bay is comprised of extensive sand and weed flats breaking into water 20 to 25 feet deep. A labyrinth of channels and shallow ponds on the peninsula provides excellent spawning habitat for crappies. Outstanding ice-out action at Presque Isle takes place at Head-of-the-Bay, Horseshoe Pond, and the Lagoons. By late summer the crappie fishing gets tough.

Look for crappies on the deep weedline, mid-bay humps, and off the deeper breakwalls of marinas on the city side.

**Pymatuning Lake (\*\*\*)**—Crawford County; 12,000 acres; 10 hp limit; over 10 ramps (PA & OH); Pymatuning State Park offers ample shoreline access.

Special Regulations: No daily limit on crappies. Reciprocal license agreement between Pennsylvania and Ohio if fishing from a boat; however, shore anglers must possess the proper state license.

AFM Craig Billingsley suspects overharvest as a significant factor contributing to the fluctuating crappie population. While not the "great" crappie lake it was once, it still remains one of the best bets in the region.

With most of the water less than 25 feet deep, lots of bays and backwaters, scattered weedbeds in the shallows, mid-lake humps, stump-lined creek channels, and a gizzard shad forage base, it's easy to see that massive Pymatuning is ideally suited to crappie spawning and growth. Crappies are found throughout the reservoir.

There is early spring crappie action in certain backwater sloughs. In late April, crappies are found in deeper water awaiting the spawn. The peak shallow-water fishing occurs from mid-May to mid-



*Slip floats are simple but vital crappie-catching tools.*



# 14 Northwest Pennsylvania Crappie Hotspots



Shenango River

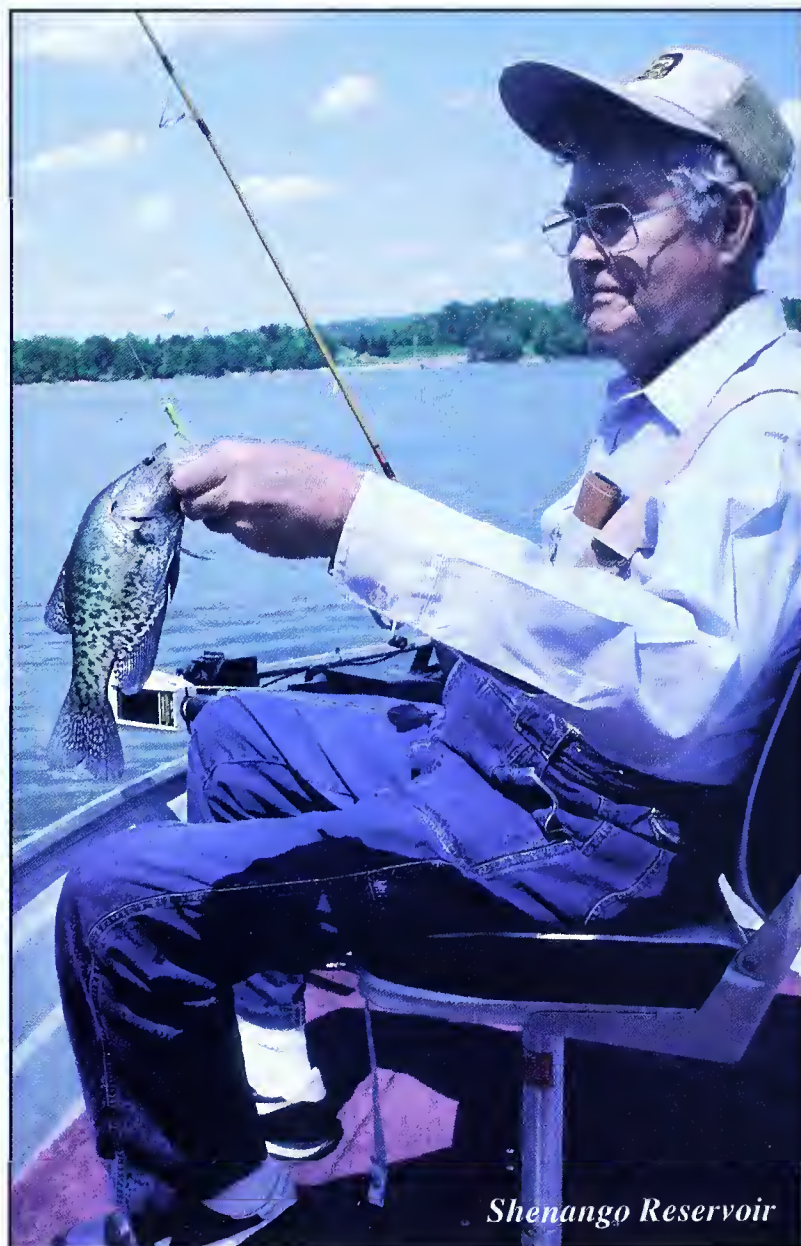
June. Summer crappies are located in depths from six to 18 feet around brushpiles on flats, as well as among stumps on points and along creek channels. Late fall fishing for crappies is excellent in 15 to 25 feet of water.

**Shenango Lake (\*\*\*)**—Mercer County; 3,560 acres; unlimited horsepower; five paved ramps; Army Corps of Engineers project with ample shoreline fishing.

With rave reviews from both AFMs, plus exaltations from area anglers, perhaps Shenango should have received four stars. Shenango is a flood control reservoir with extreme water fluctuations. Yet, the crappie population has improved significantly over the past decade with fish over 12 inches caught, including a 3 1/2-pound state record crappie which held for several years.

Although aquatic weeds are nonexistent, there are lots of shallow stumps and deadfalls for springtime cover. Summer crappies have many options, including deeper stumps on the creek channel, deadfalls on deep banks, mid-lake hard-bottom humps, rip-rap adjacent to the river channel, and bridge abutments.

***Perhaps one of the most consistent crappie producers in the northwest, Wilhelm has given up crappies over 15 inches. In the late spring, crappies are found in the shallowest stumps and emerging weedbeds.***



Shenango Reservoir



**Shenango River (\*\*)**—Mercer County; 25 miles between Pymatuning and Shenango reservoirs; very shallow—canoes only; access at bridges as well as granted through some private property.

Any river sandwiched between two excellent crappie lakes is bound to have crappies—and the Shenango River certainly does. Like crappies in most shallow rivers, pockets of fish are spread through the system because good habitat is limited. Many eddy holes are hard to reach, so crappies receive minimal angling pressure. This past season, an angling buddy pulled 20 fish from an eddy with three of them over 14 inches.

**Sugar Lake (\*\*)**—Crawford County; 90 acres; 6 hp limit; one gravel ramp; very limited shoreline fishing.

Special regulations: Sugar Lake is under Conservation Lakes regulations with a 10-crappie daily creel limit.

According to AFM Ron Lee, Sugar has the highest crappie population of any water in his district. However, the crappies are small. Lee has seen a slight improvement since implementation of Conservation Lakes regulations. Still, crappies are below the average size of other lakes in the area.

In springtime crappies are found in the lily pad beds at the north and south ends of the lake. By summer, crappies have shifted only slightly deeper to the spotty milfoil patches in this shallow dishpan lake.

**Tamarack Lake (\*\*)**—Crawford County; 562 acres; electric motors only; four gravel ramps; Commission lake with public access to shoreline.

As Tamarack Lake aged during the last 25 years, vegetation has overrun much of the lake. As a result of this weed congestion, Tamarack slipped from its position as a very good crappie lake. Even though there are numbers of crappies, the average size is down.

In the spring, fish are scattered through the shallows. By early summer, look for crappies in mid-lake areas where the milfoil beds begin to fade to sporadic strands. During the winter, crappies are readily taken through the ice.

**Tionesta Lake (\*)**—Forest County; 480 acres; unlimited horsepower; two ramps; Army Corps of Engineers project with shoreline fishing permitted.

According to AFM Ron Lee, Tionesta is making a crappie comeback. Fifteen years ago I found crappie fishing on Tionesta to be excellent. Then the fish suddenly disappeared. It's too soon to say that the lake will be as good as it was once, but many anglers are keeping their fingers crossed.

Cover is sparse at Tionesta. Some years, milfoil clumps are found growing in sporadic beds on the shallow flats. Crappies relate to the weed patches, particularly in the early summer. However, most crappies are found among the deeper stumps in six to 20 feet of water on the flats and along the creek channel.

**Lake Wilhelm (\*\*\*)**—Mercer County; 1,680 acres; 10 hp limit; four ramps; Goddard State Park with ample shoreline fishing.

Perhaps one of the most consistent crappie producers in the northwest, Wilhelm has given up crappies over 15 inches. In the late spring, crappies are found in the shallowest stumps and emerging weedbeds. By early summer, some crappie schools roam the bays just outside the weedbeds. Other schools are found on stumps and brushpiles on the flats in 5 to 12 feet of water, and relating to the creek channel. Wilhelm is particularly noted for crappies through the ice.

**Woodcock Creek Lake (\*)**—Crawford County; 500 acres; 10 hp limit; Army Corps of Engineers project with ample shoreline fishing.

Woodcock's water level goes up and down because of its flood control designation. The crappie population is up and down from year to year, too. Most of the vegetation is a stringy grass that rarely holds fish. If you can find a coontail bed, chances are it holds some crappies. Otherwise, scout the stumps and rock outcroppings in four to 20 feet of water for summertime crappies. Ice fishing often produces nice crappies.



## Crappies All Year

Crappies adapt to their environment. Location through the year is based largely on the characteristics of the particular waterway. Crappies are found at different depths and relating to different cover depending on whether it is a natural lake or reservoir, clear water or dingy water, and still water or river currents.

**Ice-out:** Warm days shortly after ice-out draw crappies into the shallows, if there are sheltered areas protected from the wind yet exposed to direct sunlight. Such sites might include river backwaters, sloughs off the main lake, canals and very shallow bays. This is not a pre-spawn movement, but the result of forage attracted to the rapidly warming water.

**Mid-spring:** A few crappies may be found shallow the entire spring, but most crappies shift back to deeper water staging areas (usually 8 to 16 feet) after the ice-out feeding spree. They may be found on stumps and brushpiles in reservoirs or positioned over remnant deep weedbeds in natural lakes.

**Late spring:** As the shallows warm into the upper 50s, expect more crappies to move shallow. Around mid-May, numbers of crappies begin to make their appearance near spawning sites. The fish may be on wood or emerging weed cover. Depth is relative to water clarity. Crappies may be as shallow as two feet. The fish are generally aggressive.

**Spawn:** When water temperatures in the shallows climb into the high 60s, crappies begin spawning. Hormonal changes cause the males to turn very dark, which is an excellent indicator that the spawn is about to happen. Look for nesting sites on sandy/marl bottoms rather than muck bottoms. If the entire lake has a muck bottom, crappies may attempt nesting on roots of lily pads. In the northwest, most crappies spawn sometime between late May and late June.

**Summer:** On many waters, crappies continue to hang in the shallows after spawning as long as baitfish are plentiful. Gradually, the schools move to deeper water in search of more forage. Lots of variables enter the picture now. On some lakes the crappie movement may be to offshore structures. In dingy water, summer crappies may be as shallow as four feet. In clear water, they may be deeper than 20 feet. The fish are generally relating to cover or breaklines, although they may suspend nearby instead of sit tight to cover. The possibilities are many.

**Fall:** On larger lakes and reservoirs there is a shift toward shallower water by open-water crappie schools in the early fall. Eventually crappies move to deep water in the late fall. With water temperature in the mid-50s and dropping, expect to find crappies in deep water. The depth may be anywhere between 15 and 40 feet, depending on the particular lake.

**Winter:** Once ice covers the lakes, crappie schools shift to shallower water. Remnant weedbeds or brushpiles in 5 to 15 feet of water are among the most common situations. The fish are generally caught well off the bottom, often just a few feet under the ice.—DB.



# Kinzua TAILWATER TROUT

BY MIKE BLEECH



*Fishing at the Kinzua Dam tailwaters holds the temptation of trophy trout. Each year many of the largest brown and rainbow trout caught in the state are taken here.*

The warm sunshine felt especially nice on the back of my neck after enduring one of the more severe winters in several years. Though the temperature was just in the high 30s, it seemed balmy. Across the river on the shady side of the valley, snow covered the ground. But the steep hillside behind me was mostly brown. The bare ground had a dirty look that spring rains would soon wash away.

I had fished since early morning. Trout started hitting around mid-morning, building to a frenzy that lasted long enough for me either to catch or lose a trout on five consecutive casts. None was especially big, but it was the first good open-water action I had seen in many weeks. How I do enjoy those first warmer days of late winter and early spring!

While the other three anglers on the hatchery side of the tailwaters still aggressively cast to the water where the action had just ceased, I relaxed in the sun, reflecting on almost three decades of superb trout fishing I have enjoyed here.

This is my favorite time for trout fishing at the Kinzua Dam tailwaters, not because it is the best fishing of the year—it is not—but rather because it is such a nice time to be fishing. And the fishing is fine.

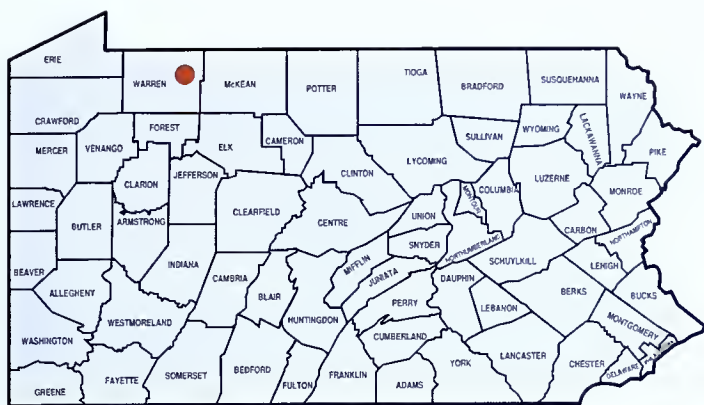
March and early April is also a fine time for trout fishing at the Kinzua Dam tailwaters because not much else is happening. Ice fishing is finished for another year. Walleye, pike and musky season ends in mid-March. Enthusiasm for the general statewide trout season is building, but the season is weeks away.

As winter gives way to spring, a productive fishing period for trout is beginning. It will not peak until late April and May, while the water temperature climbs through the 40s and 50s. By then a lot of other things will be happening.

The annual spring peak trout fishing at the Kinzua tailwaters occurs when discharge through the dam is switched from the lower gates to the upper gates. This generally occurs early in May when the water in the Allegheny Reservoir has begun to stratify by temperature. This change in discharge gates raises water temperature in the tailwaters. Good trout fishing will continue through early June, after which you will find better trout action downriver.

Fishing at the Kinzua Dam tailwaters holds the temptation of trophy trout. Each year many of the largest brown and rainbow trout caught in the state are caught here. Twenty-inch browns are quite common. Eight-pounders are possible, maybe even 10-pounders. Big





rainbows have been less common, but a few weighing eight pounds have been taken.

The Kinzua Dam tailwaters is unique in this state by its size. Only at the other end of the state can you find trout fishing this good in a big river—the Delaware. Big-river trout fishing is a very different game from small-stream fishing, or even from our larger creeks like Pine or Brokenstraw, or Penn's or the Yellow Breeches.

Simply called "the tailwaters" by locals, the portion of the river from the dam to the head of Dixon Island, 3/4-mile downriver, is covered by special regulations. Trout fishing is allowed year-round. The daily creel limit is three trout.

Successful trout fishing at the tailwaters involves timing, location, technique and luck—the usual ingredients for successful fishing.

Timing and luck go hand in hand. Most of the time trout can be caught, maybe not in great numbers, but caught. Then for brief periods trout become very active. These periods of activity might occur anytime, yet we can make some generalizations. For instance, fishing is often good during late afternoon or early evening—also early morning, usually not right at sun-up during March, more likely an hour or two after. Sun-up fishing will be better after the switch to the upper gates. Discharge from the power generating station can trigger a feeding binge, probably because food is washed into the tailwaters.

Local anglers who enjoy more than their share of success typically accomplish their good results through perseverance. Some spend so much time at the tailwaters, they might be mistaken for permanent structures.

Location is the easiest factor to control. However, even this might not be easy for some anglers because the footing is hazardous in many places. Also, understanding location is complicated by the outflow from the dam. Trout use almost all of the tailwaters. But there are not enough trout to be everywhere at once. It comes down to being in the right place at the right time. Anglers who spend a lot of time at the tailwaters can determine short-term patterns. Visitors probably will do best by spending their time at a few established hotspots.

## Trout hotspots

The edges of the discharge plume might be the most productive area of the tailwaters, at least as far as larger trout are concerned. This plume extends slightly beyond the ends of the walls on either side of the dam during normal discharge. As the discharge increases, the plume lengthens.

When outflow is not too great, and after ice melts from the railings, the walls are hotspots. However, without a special drop net, hauling big trout up and over these high walls is nearly impossible.

It has always seemed amazing to me that trout can live and

feed in the turbulent outflow between the walls. Yet, they do.

The lower wall, below the power station, can be an excellent place for trout when water is discharged into the tailwaters from the power plant. The power plant is operated by flow from a pump storage reservoir on top of the plateau, hundreds of feet above the tailwaters. The rush of water spins the turbines that generate electricity.

Several of the largest trout I have caught at the tailwaters were hooked where the current pulls away from the rip-rap just below the lower wall, creating a relatively calm eddy. This can be either from the dam outflow plume or from the power plant discharge plume. The calm eddy alongside the dam discharge, which flows almost parallel to the rip-rap, will be a few hundred feet below the lower wall, along the rip-rap. But when the power plant is discharging, the current is perpendicular to the rip-rap, and the hotspot is just at the edge between the lower wall and the rip-rap.

Most hits occur at the very edge of the current, indicating that the trout are waiting in the calm water for the current to wash food within striking distance.

Adjacent to the downriver side of the observation platform, at the Big Bend Access Area, there is a cut in the bank, widening the river slightly. Here also are signs restricting boats from going farther upriver. This is the place where a railroad trestle once crossed. The water is relatively shallow across the line the signs follow. Below the signs the bottom drops 10 feet and more in places, and the current slows. This is one of the better places to fish if you are after the biggest trout in the tailwaters.

The trout hotspots just described are on the side referred to by locals as the "59 side," because Route 59 follows this side of the river. The opposite side is called the "hatchery side," because the Allegheny National Fish Hatchery is located there. The more serious tailwaters trout fishing regulars gravitate to this side, which should tell you something.

At the lower edge of the wall on the hatchery side, the wall at the dam, the bank turns parallel to the dam. Right at the end of the wall might be the best spot for trout fishing in the tailwaters when the discharge is coming through the upper gates. Here, again, is a situation where you have a current edge. Sometimes trout will be in the current—sometimes they wait along the edge in calmer water.

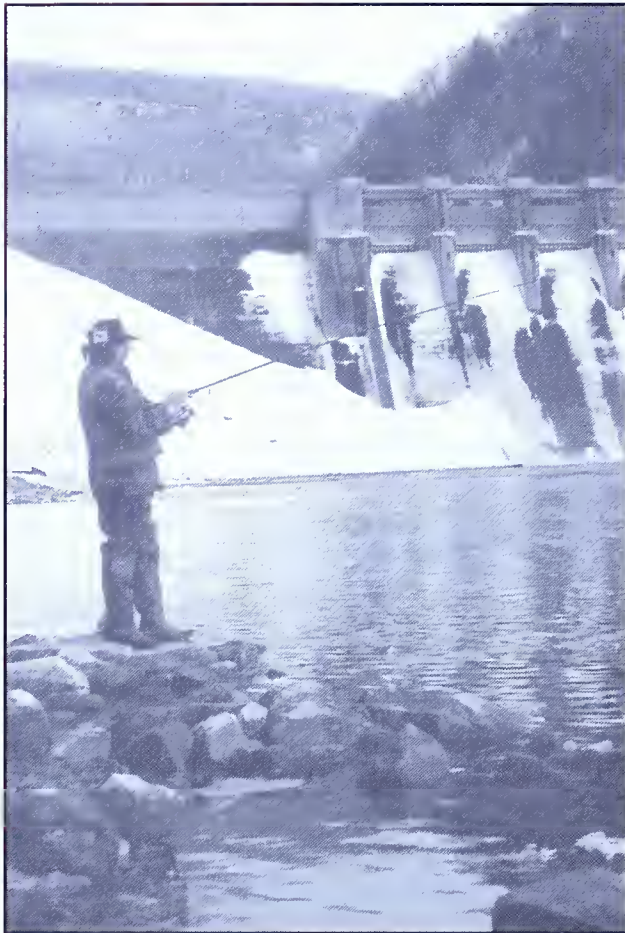
In all of these current edge situations, look for trout to be right in the current after the discharge switches from the lower gates to the upper gates. Trout are more vigorous, more aggressive, more likely to be willing to fight the current for its richer feeding potential when the water temperature is in the 50s and lower 60s.

A small island is adjacent to the lower end of the hatchery. A gravel bar extends on about a 45-degree angle from the upper end of the island to a shallow flat on the hatchery side. A current flows over this bar into a deep channel that separates the island from the hatchery side. Read the water here just as you would read a deep pool in a trout creek. When trout are active they feed in and around the edges of this current. A favorite place to fish this is at the steps that connect the hatchery to the river edge.

Also, just upriver from the steps is a discharge pipe from the hatchery into the river. Trout are often right off the end of this pipe. This place was much more productive when rainbow trout from the Allegheny National Fish Hatchery were stocked into the tailwaters.



# Kinzua TAILWATER TROUT



**Anglers who spend a lot of time at the tailwaters can determine short-term patterns. Visitors probably will do best by spending their time at a few established hotspots.**

The deep channel alongside the island is another excellent place to look for the biggest trout in the tailwaters. You might have noticed that the better places for big trout are where there is a current entering deep water. This is common to big browns everywhere.

## Trout techniques

The majority of trout that have been caught at the Kinzua tailwaters were lured by either shiners, floating minnow lures, jigs or nightcrawlers. Spoons are a distant fifth only because the others are more popular.

The primary natural food for tailwaters trout is small fish that have been sucked through the dam. Through the three decades since the dam was built, these small fish have included yellow perch, crappies, white bass and various minnows. Currently the reservoir has an abundant shiner population, a mix of spottails and emerald shiners that most anglers cannot tell apart. So it is not surprising that shiners are the most popular bait. They are available at local bait and tackle shops.

Most long-time tailwaters anglers string their minnows. This

terminal rig uses a bait needle to thread the fishing line into the minnow's mouth and out the vent. A treble hook is attached to the line, the line is pulled snug, and one point of the treble hook is inserted into the rear portion of the minnow.

This strung minnow rig allows the minnow to be cast a long way without ripping the minnow from the hook, which is often important because wading is not allowed in the Kinzua tailwaters. Because many of the minnows the trout are eating are stunned, the erratic, spinning manner of the strung minnow during the retrieve is perfect.

This rig is completed with either an egg sinker or splitshot, depending on the casting distance and water depth. Egg sinkers are held a couple of feet up the line by either a splitshot or barrel swivel. Barrel swivels prevent some line twist, but sometimes snags are so common that the barrel swivel adds too much expense to the rig, and it is too time-consuming to tie into the line.

One of the more unusual methods of fishing the strung minnow rig is to retrieve it fast and just under the surface, while fishing from the walls. Often you can see trout following or striking the bait. This is a hot method during May.

The strung minnow is the perfect rig for fishing the deeper water because you do not have to wait for trout to get the hook inside their mouths. As you would when using artificial lures, you set the hook as soon as you feel the strike. If you lip-hook minnows, trout usually feel the unnatural pull of the bowed line, and reject the bait quickly.

Floating minnow lures are best when the trout are actively feeding near the surface. Retrieve them with a twitching, stop-and-go motion that mimics an injured shiner.

Jigs can be used in any situation because they can be fished shallow or deep. White jigs, either bucktails or plastic bodies, have shown the best results on tailwaters trout.

Spoons have similar versatility. They have a big advantage over floating minnow lures because they can be cast much farther, and can be fished much deeper.

Kinzua tailwaters trout, like most trout, can be attracted by bright or shiny colors. Some of the better color patterns are orange/gold, red/gold, chartreuse/silver and blue/silver.

Try the Kinzua tailwaters trout this spring. It is one of the finest fishing opportunities in this state.

ANGLER

## Special Kinzua Tailwater Regulations

Trout fishing is allowed year-round at the Kinzua Dam tailwaters, from the dam to the upper end of Dixon Island, a distance of about 3/4-mile. The daily creel limit is three trout.

A boat launch suitable for smaller boats is located on the Route 59 side, toward the lower end of the parking lot. However, most of the better trout water cannot be reached by boat because boats are not allowed in the upper portion of the area. The no-boat-ing area is well-marked with signs.

Wading is prohibited in the tailwaters because of treacherous bottom conditions.—MB.

## Specialized Tailwater Trout Tackle

Some tailwaters trout fishing specialists use long spinning rods, 8 feet to 12 feet, similar to the rods used by steelhead anglers. These rods cast considerably farther than standard-length rods. They also can keep more line off the water, which reduces line bow.

Trout can be terribly line-shy. Use fine-diameter, low-visibility 4- to 8-pound-test line.—MB.



# Refined River Walleye Techniques

by Jeff Knapp



photo-Jeff Knapp

**Though it may still come as a surprise to some anglers, the best time to catch these fish is during the winter.**

Pennsylvania is blessed with many fishing treasurers, but its greatest resource is its rivers. From the state's eastern boundary, formed by the Delaware River, to the place where the Ohio River leaves western Pennsylvania to form the Ohio/West Virginia border, the Keystone angler has flowing water, and much of it holds fat, sassy walleyes. Though it may still come as a surprise to some anglers, the best time to catch these fish is during the winter.

The walleye is catching a lot more of the limelight these days. Three major tournament trails revolve around the walleye, with the spinoff publicity creating a greater awareness of what a great gamefish the walleye is. In Pennsylvania, surveys conducted by the Commission show that the walleye is the third most popular gamefish among state anglers, topped only by the traditional favorites trout and bass.

What this means to the walleye angler is that as more attention is directed toward the species, ways to catch the species



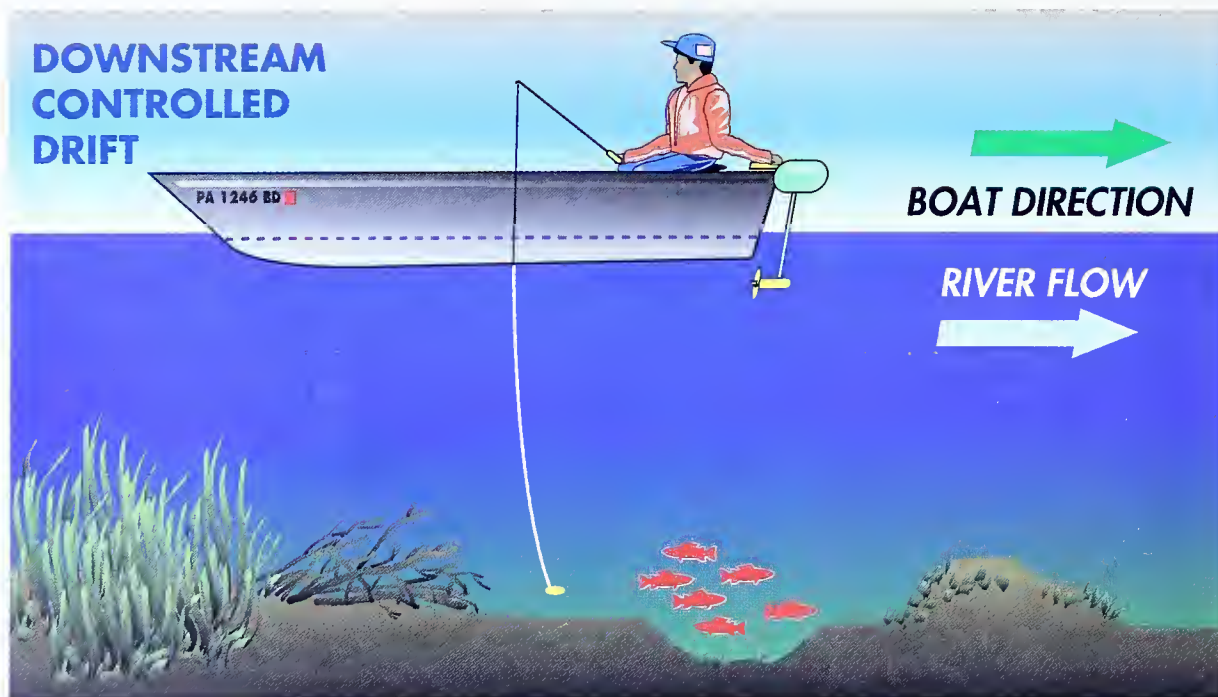


Figure 1.  
**Downriver  
 Controlled Drift**  
*Vertical presentation,  
 jig slightly off the  
 bottom, and angler's  
 hand on the trolling  
 motor for control.  
 Note the boat direction  
 and direction of the  
 river flow.*

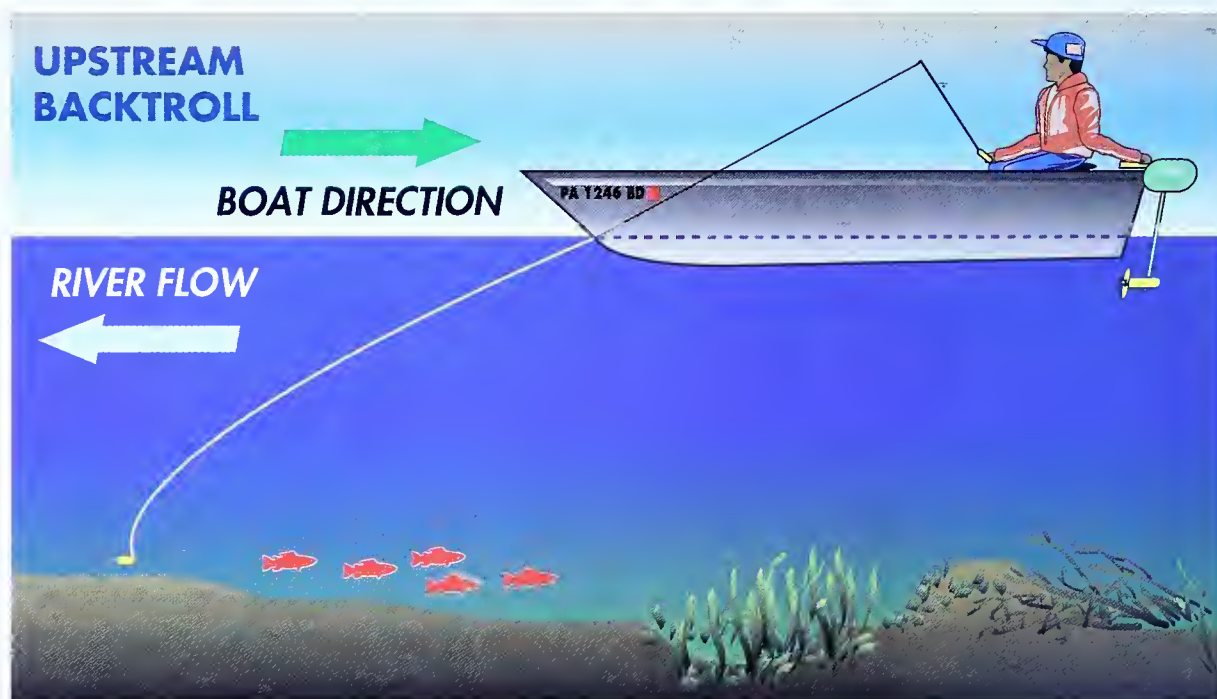


Figure 2.  
**Upstream  
 Backtroll**  
*Presentation is  
 about 45 degrees,  
 bottom-bouncer  
 rig on the bottom,  
 and angler's hand  
 on the trolling  
 motor for control.  
 Note motor's  
 thrust direction  
 and direction of  
 the river flow.*

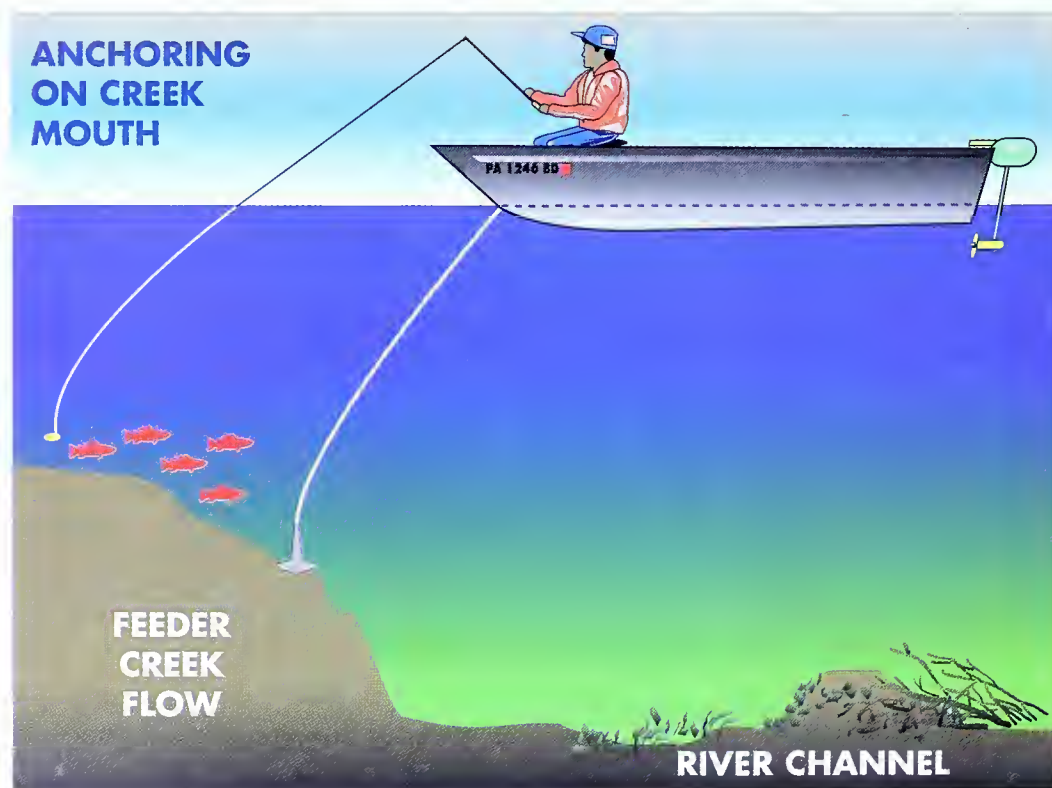


Figure 3.  
**Anchoring on  
 Creek Mouth**  
*Boat is anchored over  
 deeper water with the  
 anchor on the shallow  
 lip of the feeder creek  
 mouth. Active walleyes  
 most likely hold on the  
 shallow lip of the  
 feeder creek mouth.  
 Cast your jig from the  
 deep-water anchored  
 position to shallow  
 water.*





increase. Walleyes live in diverse environments, and it takes a versatile angler to catch them. That's part of the attraction. River walleye angling, once a sport enjoyed only by a relatively few "river rats," has also witnessed gains in both tackle used, and more importantly, the techniques used. Pay heed, then, to the following information, provided by an admitted river rat who has witnessed these changes first-hand.

## Tackle

I'm not one to thoughtlessly embrace every new tackle variation brought on by the industry, but some of the recent improvements are truly just that. This is particularly true in the way of leadhead jigs.

Leadhead jigs are the foundation of many river-fishing situations. As leading makers of jigs have jockeyed for notoriety, mostly because of the big walleye tournaments, better jigs evolved. Improvements in jig design have been incorporated into many lines of jigs, often from recommendations of pro anglers. Even though some of the refinements may be a bit too fine to make any real difference in actual fishing situations, some changes are invaluable. Among the more useful improvements are better-shaped heads, better and larger hooks, wider color choices and sizes, and systems for employing effective stinger hooks.

Jighead shape ties in to how well (or not well) a jig rides with the river's current. In most river walleye situations it is beneficial to have a jig "get down." No, it isn't supposed to dance. It does, however, need to move through the water with minimum resistance. Jigs with roundish or oval head do this well. Ones of a stand-up style, often touted as river jigs, tend to ride up more, making them less effective river jigs. Stand-ups do work well when casting in areas of little or no current.

Color and weight selections speak for themselves. They give you a bit more to offer fish on those days when walleyes are extra picky. Some jigs now come with larger hooks, especially on lighter-weight jigs that formerly came only with crappie-sized hooks. A 1/16-ounce jig with a size 1/0 hook can be deadly for walleyes in the right conditions, and it's now available.

Stinger hooks—secondary small treble hooks for nailing short-striking fish—have been around a while, but many more jigs are now coming packaged with stinger hooks, and have a second eyelet on the jighead for use with the stinger.

Stinger hooks themselves have evolved. A few seasons ago the choice was limited to two-inch light-wire snells on the hook. In addition to the wire, you can now buy stingers with light monofilament line.

These stingers seem to allow the natural bait—which one fishes in combination with the jighead—to move more naturally. The stinger I now prefer comes with one of its tines soldered in the opposite direction. This is the tine you stick in the minnow (the most common bait in the winter/early spring), and it stays in better than it does with a traditional treble hook.

Bottom-bouncing sinkers have become popular in many aspects of walleye fishing, river fishing included. Bottom-bouncers



were featured in a recent *Pennsylvania Angler*. They are sinker systems built around a two-legged wire "vee," somewhat similar to a spinnerbait wire. One leg of the vee houses the lead weight, while the snell and bait snap to the other. Bottom-bouncers are effective in a couple of river situations, which you'll see a bit later.

The same improvements in rods and reels that benefit all anglers certainly help the winter walleye fisherman, but it's something other than fishing tackle that is perhaps even more significant—that's effective, efficient winter clothing. Over the past winters I've gotten some strange looks towing my boat to the local river—looks where the observer was obviously questioning my



# Refined River Walleye Techniques

sanity. Fact is, with the clothing available today, most days I not only survive out there, but I am downright comfortable. If you plan to do much cold-weather fishing, invest in waterproof, insulated, breathable clothing. You can do as I do and buy it in hunting patterns and double its use, helping to justify the substantial price tag. And learn to fish while wearing gloves.

## Presentation techniques

Besides advancements in terminal tackle, anglers can benefit from better knowledge and experience in how to present their offerings to river-dwelling winter walleyes. How you fish depends on the river in question, but only to a certain degree. I've had the good fortune to have fished some of the country's best walleye rivers, and there are more similarities than differences. The axiom in river walleye fishing that says "a river is a river" tends to be true.

Take, for instance, the rivers of western Pennsylvania—the Ohio River drainage—that I fish from late November until the season closes in mid-March. Both walleyes and saugers thrive in the Ohio, Monongahela and Allegheny rivers, and during the winter the fish all have one thing in common: They seek out areas with reduced current. That simple common denominator can put you on more winter walleyes than any other. And it's true not only of these three rivers, but of the Susquehanna and Delaware as well.

Walleyes do not, at least for long, stay in areas of heavy current when the water is less than 40 degrees, the common winter scenario. They might during peak activity levels when they are really biting, but not when they are in a more negative mood. Let's look at some common situations, why the fish are there, and how to fish for them.

## Holes and eddies

There's a favorite place of mine on the Allegheny River. A small stream—one about 10 to 15 feet wide—washes into the river, forming a large gravel bar. It acts as a miniature dam, slowing the current of the deeper water above it, and deflecting the river's flow enough so that there's an eddy and slackwater pool below it. Both of these spots often hold walleyes.

Why? Obviously, the reduced current has a lot to do with it. Also, both spots, which I tend to call "drifts," have water that ranges from 10 to 25 feet deep, the kind of soft, mucky bottom that attracts baitfish (No, walleyes aren't always around rock!), some sunken wood, and significant size. The requirements are met.

Why do I refer to these spots as "drifts"? Because that's how they are normally fished. Boat control is an important aspect

*With the clothing available today, most days I not only survive out there, but I am downright comfortable. If you plan to do much cold-weather fishing, invest in waterproof, insulated, breathable clothing.*



Mark Pasco with Allegheny River walleye

photo-Jeff Knapp



in presentation. I think of the boat as an extension of the angler's arms and fishing rod. How well you control the boat directly influences how many fish you'll likely catch. Inactive wall-eyes can be scattered, and the angler who covers the water effectively spends more time hooking fish.

The basic presentation is to go with the flow. For instance, when I'm fishing either of these drifts, I start at the upstream end. For the spot above the gravel bar, I motor upriver about 150 yards. There the river becomes shallow, and the current picks up, marking the end of the productive water.

I stop the boat, drop in the trolling motor, and then flip a jig-and-minnow over the side, allowing it to sink to the bottom. The object is to edge the boat along at the same speed as the current. This lets you fish the jig in a vertical fashion, nearly directly under the boat. If the jig is dragging too far upstream of you, the boat must be slowed. If the jig is washing past the boat, you may have to speed up boat movement. Any upstream wind can push the boat back up the river, a situation you have to adjust for by kicking the boat in gear and backing down the river. If you're having trouble keeping up with the jig, you could be fishing in too much current, or with too light a jig. In most situations I start with a 1/4-ounce jig. This covers average situations from 10 to 30 feet. More shallow water allows you to use a lighter jig; deeper water, a heavier jig, perhaps. The rule is to stay as light as you can while maintaining a feel for where the jig is.

Continue drifting along, making necessary adjustments with the motor, until you reach the end of the "good" water. If I've caught fish along the way, chances are I'll circle around and work that area again. If not, I motor back up and try again, this time varying the water covered by holding farther or closer to shore. In this manner the entire section can be fished in three or four drifts.

One of the many advantages of this controlled drifting approach is that you can lift the jig up an inch or two off the bottom. This puts the presentation in their faces, and eliminates most snags. It's also much easier to feel that mushy bite of a walleye when the bait is suspended, instead of dragging the bottom. If you're feeling the jig bounce on the bottom, you have too much line out. Remember, fish vertically.

Fathead minnows work well with the jig, as do larger golden shiners. If you're really lucky you'll have some "natural" bait captured from the watershed itself, instead of store-bought bait. In any case, I don't use a stinger hook unless the minnow is three inches or larger, or if small walleyes keep sucking on the end of fathead minnows and I sting them just to see what keeps biting short.

### River mouths, slackwater basins

Where small rivers and large streams enter the main river there's often a basin created that lacks much in the way of current. When looking over the spot with a depthfinder, it often doesn't look like much. In many cases the water isn't deep, and the bottom tends to be a featureless delta, sand and much washed out from the tributary with an edge cut by the main river current. But places like these can be the best for attracting walleyes, actively feeding ones, especially. Baitfish tend to congregate in spots like these, and draw the predators in.

A slow-flowing basin like this can be fished in just the manner described, by drifting down through it with a jig and minnow. In fact, that's how I'd start my approach. But when I'd get to the end, instead of motoring back up for another pass, I might

backtroll against the current, moving upriver while dragging the baits behind me. I know, fish are supposed to be programmed to look for food moving *with* the current. But on some days dragging something past them from their backsides really turns them on. And of all the fish you catch during the day, often the biggest ones are taken using the upstream approach.

It doesn't take much flow to wash away a jig when you're pulling it against the current. For that reason it may pay to have a secondary rod rigged with a heavy jig, a 1/2-ounce or so, for the upstream backtroll. Or better yet, have a baitcaster rigged up with a bottom bouncer rigged with a floating jighead and minnow. The bouncer, I found out last fall from Ted Takasaki on Minnesota's Rainey River, is an ideal way to present live bait while working upriver.


Why does this unconventional presentation work? Maybe because the bait comes up from behind and startles the bigger, more predatory fish into striking out of reflex. It really doesn't matter why it works. The important thing is that it works.

### Anchoring on active walleyes

The first two scenarios deal with catching inactive fish, done so by bringing the boat to them. But even in the dead of winter, walleyes often get active, and it happens most often during the witching hour, the twilight period. That's when anchoring comes into play.

Slackwater areas that hold walleyes also tend to have identifiable shallow edges or flats to which fish migrate when they are feeding. It would be the gravel bar itself on the first spot I described, up in the creek mouth in the second.

By anchoring just off these edges and casting up on them—from deep to shallow—it's possible to have fast action during that final hour. Use the lighter jigs in your box for this situation.

You may have to experiment with anchoring positions before getting the boat just right. Don't be lazy, because a difference of a few yards (feet sometimes), can mean a couple of fish or 20 fish. I've caught over 100 fish in an outing from such an anchored position when everything fell into place. 

## Fishing from Shore

What with boat control, bottom bouncers and depthsounders, what's in this for the shore angler? Plenty!

If you paid attention to the last part of the text, dealing with anchoring on active walleyes, you were exposed to the best spot for the shore-bound or wading angler.

Tributaries draw in active, biting walleyes, bringing them into areas easily accessible from shore. The best spots have some type of slackwater included with them, like the gravel bar or basin scenarios.

Get to the river about an hour before dark. Bring along an assortment of jigs. You'll be fishing shallow water, so 1/8-ounce jigs should do it. Brown and black work well in the fading light. Have a small bait bucket to handle the minnows. Another presentation option is a minnow-shaped crankbait like a Rapala. The jointed models especially exhibit nice action while under a slow retrieve.

Be quiet, put in your time, and you may well catch bigger walleyes than anglers in boats catch.—JK.



# On the Water

with Charles F. Waterman

## The Easy Caster

Well-done fly casting is pretty. It involves loops that can be called artistic. It can involve careful copying of the hands of a clock and being precise. It can be very complex to begin with and very simple as it develops. It can be very restful and very tiring. And because no two polished experts do it exactly the same, I guess it can be called artistic. For that matter, if all baseball players used a bat exactly the same way, there would be no homerun kings.

There was a time when a true fly casting expert insisted that he did it all with his wrist, and he proved it by holding a book between his elbow and his side. And later they sold wrist-stiffening gadgets that held the wrist rigid so only the rest of the arm could be used. There are wonderful casters who use only a high, fast loop, and there are other experts who let the backcast sag until it barely clears the bank or water. All of these vagaries are very important to the learning caster because he may eventually use them all and add some of his own.

Most of the fly casters who quit do so just as they have learned to throw fairly accurately and fairly long, but find it is a lot of work. Only a little farther along it gets much easier, and most of us soon reach the point where our feet tire before our arms in a long day's fishing. In noting the ways expert casters get their distance and accuracy, I think of the scientists who proved that the bumblebee is technically unable to fly.

Now, by the book, you stop your backcast at 1 o'clock, just a little past straight up, and your rod is vertical from left to right. Your wrist is stiff and your loop is tight. That's the way to learn, but from there you begin to relax and probably get a little restfully sloppy. Most veterans tip the rod a little out from their bodies during most of their casting, even though they may go back to the rigid formula when they need to. That is, a right-hander tips it a little to his right. It's a little easier for most of us.

And now the sloppy old-timer breaks his wrist when he feels like it, and he lets his backcast sag, especially on some of his



long casts, and he may let the rod grip rock a little in his fist. He's learned to point the rod right above the fly to be ready for retrieves and hook setting but as time goes by he finds that if he points it off to his right (right-handed) he has more control.

And they told him to retrieve only with his line hand and to leave the rod tip alone, but he learned that for something like a bass bug he can flick his rod tip for special effects and instantly reclaim the loose line he has given.

And somebody explained how he should run the line through the first finger of the rod hand as he moves it with his line hand but he finds that the middle finger is a lot longer and he can reach out better with it, and he does it that way. And he learned a nice, crisp double-haul that gets him distance but he found that if he swung his line hand clear down past his knee and far back to the rear, he could get more distance, so he does it that way much of the time.

Use the reel with your line hand, he was told, but he finds that he can't crank as fast with that one, and when he has to retrieve fast he passes the rod to his line hand and cranks with his master hand.

When he got his first fly rod he matched it with the line having the same number, but he found an overweight line would cast easier for most of the fishing he did, so he overloaded his rod—or maybe he found he liked to throw flat, fast casts and a really light line beat the wind and made him more accurate.

When the wind came up he learned to cheat with a sideswipe, and he learned that if he threw a big loop with the wind and a tight loop against it, things would go much easier, so he used that system whether the wind was in his face or at his back. Maybe he learned to throw excess line over his shoulder in an emergency.

So he's a veteran.

***Most of the fly casters who quit do so just as they have learned to throw fairly accurately and fairly long, but find it is a lot of work. Only a little farther along it gets much easier, and most of us soon reach the point where our feet tire before our arms in a long day's fishing.***



# Anglers Currents

## Commission Obtains Five Locks Property

The Fish and Boat Commission, in conjunction with the Wildlands Conservancy/Wildlands Trust Fund, has acquired more than 20 acres of land in Berks County. The purchase secures much-needed public access to the Schuylkill River.

The Commission formally obtained the 21.58-acre tract in Perry Township on December 5. The property, commonly referred to as "Five Locks," is named after the series of locks once located nearby along the former Schuylkill Canal.

The Commission's immediate plan for Five Locks is the establishment of walk-in access for anglers and small-craft boaters. A small parking area is planned for the future, permitting vehicles with car-top boat carriers. This access is considered significant by the Fish and Boat Commission because it facilitates expanded recreational opportunities along the Schuylkill, a key southeast Pennsylvania river that previously offered only limited public access.

The purchase of Five Locks from the Berks County Conservancy was made possible through joint cooperation by the Fish and Boat Commission and the Wildlands Conservancy's land preservation arm, the Wildlands Trust Fund.

The Berks County Conservancy originally obtained the Five Locks tract in 1980 as a donation. To facilitate conveyance of the land to the Commission, the Wildlands Conservancy/Wildlands Trust Fund evenly split the \$1,000 per-acre asking price with the agency. The Wildlands Conservancy transferred its ownership interest to the Commission at a ceremony on the Five Locks property, last December.

"I'm very pleased to have had the opportunity to participate in this transfer," said Fish and Boat Commissioner Donald Lacy of Reading. "The Five Locks project is in keeping with our mission to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources. This is the first of what I hope are many such joint efforts between this agency and these conservation groups."

photo-Dan Trechtmick



Adrian D'Cruz (left) and Dr. G. W. Mawle (left center), representatives of Great Britain's National Rivers Authority, visited Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Massachusetts and California last spring to study license displaying systems. Looking over the area at the Commission's Middletown Access, Dauphin County, with D'Cruz and Mawle are WCO K. Derek Pritts and Bureau of Law Enforcement Director Edward W. Manhart.



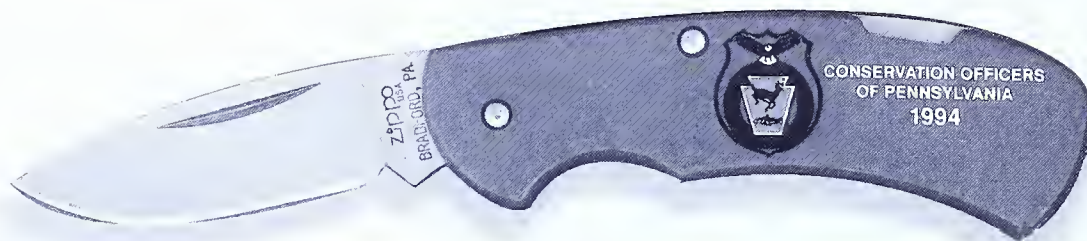
August 27, 1994, marked the dedication of this new floating fishing pier at Rachel Carson Riverfront Park in Cheswick, Allegheny County. The 120-foot-long fishing pier is specially designed for use by persons with disabilities, featuring openings in the railings for fishing rods, low wooden structures for tackle boxes and gear, and several benches. It runs parallel to the Allegheny River shoreline and is accessible from a ramp on shore. The Duquesne Light Cheswick Power Station donated the new pier to the Borough of Cheswick.



Dave Bard, of Erie, earned a Senior Angler Award for this steelhead. The Presque Isle Bay fish weighed 18 pounds, 2 ounces and was 30 inches long. The fish was one pound less than the current state record. Nice fish, Dave!

Daniel Light, of Jonestown, used a nightcrawler to entice this crappie. The fish, caught in Lions Lake, Lebanon County, weighed 3 pounds and was 17 inches long.





The Conservation Officers of Pennsylvania (COPA) are offering this limited edition pocket knife to raise funds to sponsor the 1995 North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers' Association Conference in Pennsylvania. The knife, a 3-inch Case steel single-locking blade, features an orange Zytel handle with the COPA logo and lettering. Each knife comes with a presentation case, and each includes Zippo's lifetime guarantee. Limited edition numbering is available from 0001 to 1000 on a first-come, first-served basis. The knife sells for \$19.99 plus 6% sales tax, or \$21.19 postpaid. For more details and order forms, contact: Thomas Kamerzel, PA Fish & Boat Commission, Bureau of Law Enforcement, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000; phone: 717-657-4542.



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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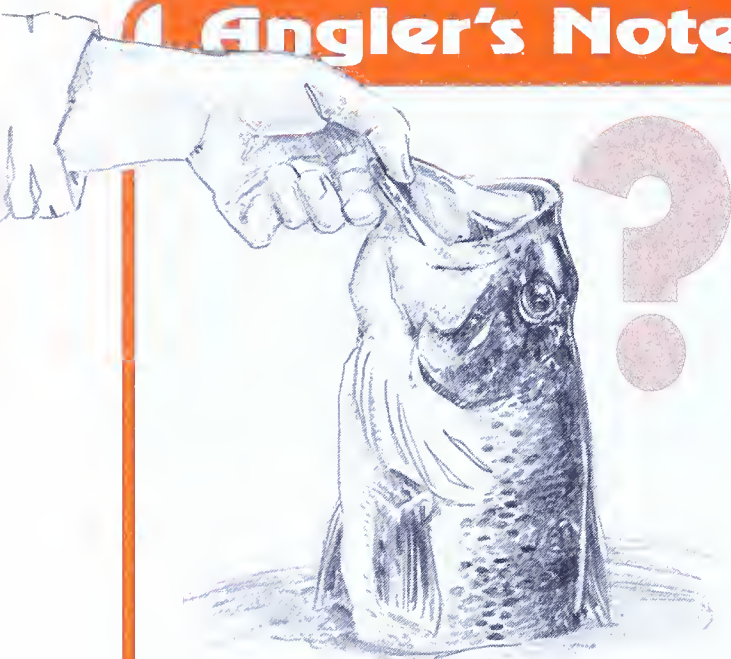
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## Angler's Notebook by Jeff Bryan



The practice of catch-and-release fishing for smallmouth bass is growing in acceptance, and rightly so. A typical smallmouth begins to spawn in its third or fourth year, when it reaches approximately 10 or 11 inches. It takes a smallmouth about eight years to reach 17 inches, or about three pounds, so it is important to treat these fish carefully so they can live long enough to grow into trophy fish.

If a really big trout is your goal, your best bet is to fish large streamers in the lower portions, or tails, of deep pools. Evening is usually the best time to try for these trophies because they often come into these areas to feed on minnows. Cast your fly across-stream so the fly swings through the tail of the pool at the lowest point in its drift.

When fishing lily pads for bass, use a weedless spoon. Pull it over the tops of the pads, but when it comes to an opening, let the spoon flutter to the bottom. This is often when a big bass strikes. Try a pork rind trailer to give the spoon more fluttering action.

The best spots to look for fish are where they can find both food and cover. Weedbeds, sunken trees, rocks, boulders, stumps, overhanging bushes, undercut banks and logs provide the necessary protection to make the fish feel safe, and the opportunity to find food. Concentrate your efforts on these areas.

When planning a fishing trip to unfamiliar waters, book a guide for the first day. Not only can the guide show you the best methods for fishing his "home waters," but he can provide you with enough information to fish other hotspots for the rest of your trip. Without the services of a guide you can waste precious vacation days just figuring out how and where to fish, and before you know it, it's time to leave.

The first place to look for walleyes in lakes are underwater trenches, points, gently sloping gravel bars and sunken islands. Walleyes spend much of their time in the deeper water of lakes (15 to 30 feet), but move into shallow water in the evening to feed.

If you can't get your rod to come apart because of sticky ferrules, call your fishing partner over. Have him place his hands on either side of the ferrule, then you put your hands over his and pull steadily (do not jerk). If you are alone, try sitting down and putting the rod under your legs, using your knees to brace your hands while pulling the rod apart. Never twist the ferrules.

When fishing a dry fly and a nymph dropper fly, it is just as important to sink the nymph as it is to make sure the dry fly is floating. Often you will see your nymph riding on the surface of the water. When this happens, simply wet the fly, and the tippet, with saliva. This will let the nymph break the surface tension of the water.

illustration- Ted Walke



# SMART

## Angler's Notebook

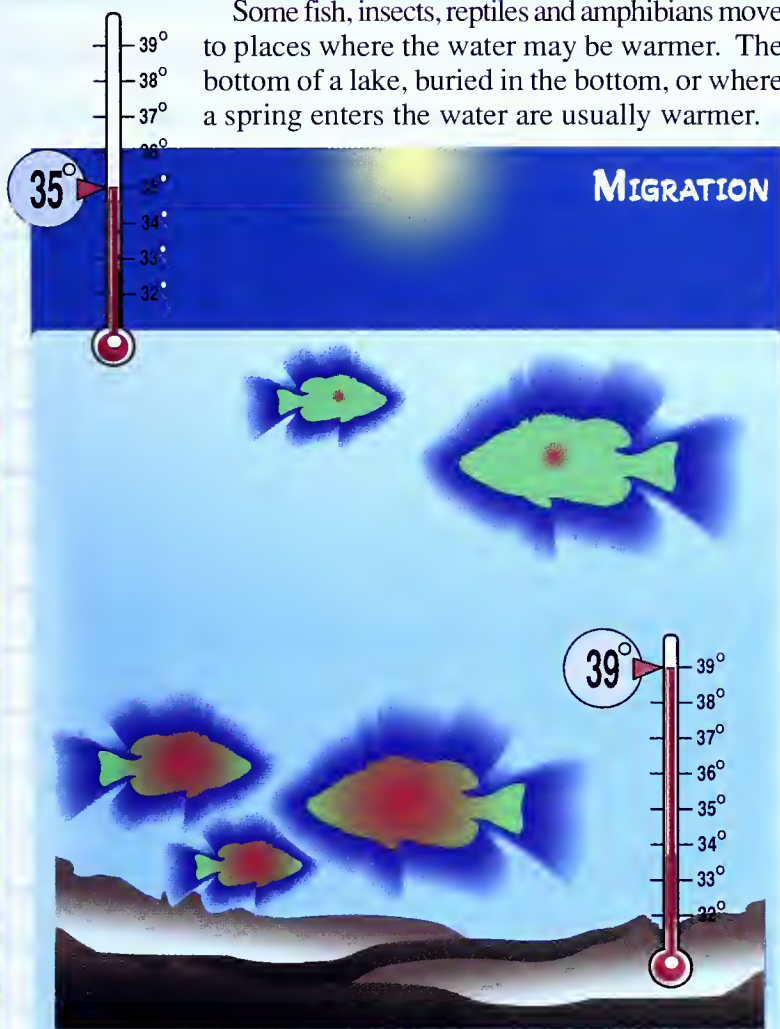
by Carl Richardson

### Winter Survival

Fish, insects and some other aquatic animals are cold-blooded. Unlike us, their body temperatures vary with the temperature of their surroundings. No matter how warm or cold it is outside, the human body temperature stays around 98 degrees. A trout and the insects living in a stream could have body temperatures close to freezing, 32 degrees. How do cold-blooded aquatic critters deal with cold water?

#### MIGRATION

Some fish, insects, reptiles and amphibians move to places where the water may be warmer. The bottom of a lake, buried in the bottom, or where a spring enters the water are usually warmer.

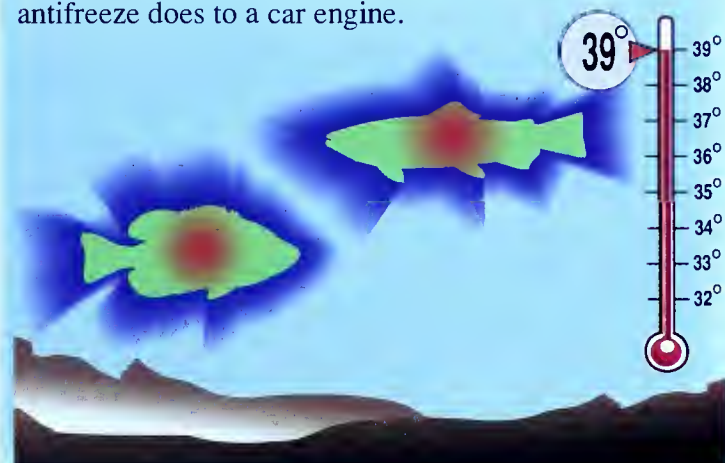


#### ACTIVITY LEVEL

Most fish slow down and hang out, doing very little eating and moving around. But they often move around to spots where the sun warms them. Some insects do the same thing. This is different from hibernation. They don't sleep as a bear does. Fish, amphibians, reptiles and insects just slow down. This saves energy for basic work, like breathing and keeping blood moving around the body. Some fish are active, though, especially when food is plentiful.

#### ANTIFREEZE

Because water freezes at 32 degrees and animals have plenty of water in their bodies, they must keep that water from freezing. They have special chemicals and salts in their blood and other fluids that keep them from freezing. This "antifreeze" does the same thing to an insect's blood that antifreeze does to a car engine.



#### ACTIVITY LEVEL





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# Straight Talk

## The CAP Program

Would you like to see more public shoreline and access sites available to the anglers and boaters of Pennsylvania? Or maybe you would like more public waterfront property available for quiet walks along a bubbling brook. Perhaps you would just like to sit along or photograph a pristine stream.

More of these opportunities can become available if sportsmen, organizations and other people participate in the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's Conservation Acquisition Partnership (CAP)—a program that provides a mechanism for receiving private monetary donations for use in acquiring lands for public enjoyment.

The Fish and Boat Commission currently owns or has under easement about 27,713 acres of land and leases some 11,476 acres. These areas are open for free use by all Pennsylvania citizens.

These properties provide access to some outstanding fishing, boating and recreational opportunities, but there are many more areas that are not open to the public. Over the years, sportsmen and outdoor groups have expressed a desire for more public access to Pennsylvania's streams, rivers and lakes. The Commission shares that desire.

Riparian property is in high demand for development into homes, summer resorts, retreats and commercial uses and thus is very expensive to purchase.

Additionally, more and more private shorelines are posted with "No Trespassing" signs. The Fish and Boat Commission has been doing its best to establish cooperative agreements with landowners to remove these signs and improve stream habitat. The Commission has also purchased a limited amount of conservation easements for shoreline property throughout the Commonwealth.

These efforts are often restricted by a lack of funds. Even though the Commission occasionally receives some donations earmarked to help purchase private property, these funds are usually limited. Consequently, the Commission has been restricted in the amount of private land it has been able to purchase.

To help the Commission develop a more ambitious land acquisition and easement program, the CAP program was established in 1993 to seek tax-deductible cash donations to be deposited into special accounts earmarked for access area acquisition. This money will be used only to buy or gain easements to property that directly benefits the anglers, boaters and other conservationists of the Commonwealth.

Furthermore, the Fish and Boat Commission will match the cash contributions to the CAP fund on a dollar-for-dollar basis. For significant projects that may qualify for federal participation, a land purchase might cost the CAP program only 25 percent of the appraised property value. Through this type of partnership, the purchasing power of each single contribution is greatly enhanced.

Land acquisitions and easements must be planned on a rational basis for the maximum benefit and enjoyment. Therefore, CAP donations cannot be site-specific or targeted for property that satisfies



**Peter A. Colangelo**

*Executive Director*

*Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*

only the needs and wishes of special-interest groups. Exceptions could be made if a donation were sufficiently large enough to purchase an entire trust of property that the Commission determines is important to its mission.

If you wish to make a tax-deductible contribution, please send your check or money order in any amount to: CAP Program, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Bureau of Administrative Services, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.

Your support of this worthwhile program will be greatly appreciated. As tokens of appreciation, the Commission will provide either decals, ball caps or citations for donors, based on the amount of contribution. Single donations of \$1,000 or more will receive a special plaque and a valuable "Conservation and Education" edition of the First of State Trout/Salmon Stamp print while supplies last.

More importantly, contributors will receive the satisfaction of knowing they have preserved our resources for present and future generations.



*Peter A. Colangelo*



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*This issue's cover shows successful Pennsylvania angler David Thieman about to release a rainbow trout.*

**New boating law**

In Pennsylvania in 1994, there were 15 fatalities in recreational boating accidents. U.S. Coast Guard nationwide boating accident statistics and Pennsylvania data match. The data shows that the two most common causes of small-boat accident fatalities are capsizing and falling overboard. These causes account for 73 percent, or 11 out of 15, of the fatal boating accidents in Pennsylvania in 1994. In both kinds of accidents, victims nearly always entered the water suddenly and unexpectedly. Is it any wonder that in more than 86 percent of all 1994 Pennsylvania boating accidents with fatalities, victims weren't wearing PFDs (personal flotation devices)?

Clearly, wearing a life jacket aboard your fishing boat can save your life. The laws of some 20 states, including Pennsylvania, require that children below a certain age wear PFDs when they are aboard a boat.

Effective May 1, 1995, Coast Guard regulations specify that Type IV PFDs (seat cushions and ring buoys) can no longer be substituted for wearable devices (Types I, II, III or V). This means that having only an approved Type IV device aboard your boat for each person aboard, like a seat cushion, is no longer legal. You must have a wearable device aboard for every person in your boat. The law stops short of requiring everyone to wear a device aboard a boat, but it is designed to encourage boaters to wear PFDs, not just have them available.

—*Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.*





Raystown Lake

# CRAPPIES

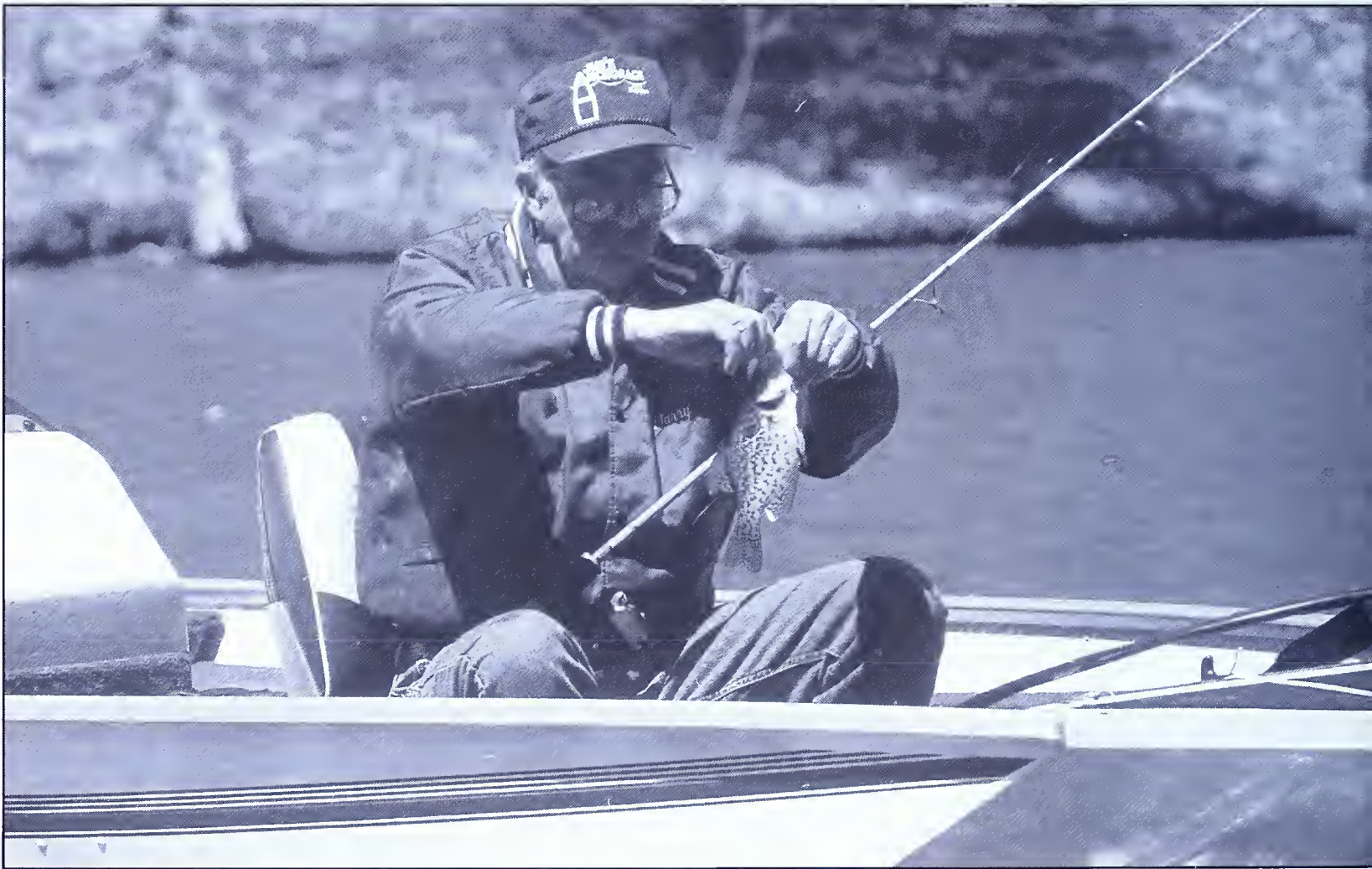
by Mike Bleech

"Let's run down-lake," my pal Harry Redline said. "The upper end—that's where everyone fishes for crappies. But with the water color the way it is..."

Typical for mid-April, the water was cloudy toward the upper end of Raystown Lake, but very clear near the dam.

"There might be more crappies in the upper end, but they get pounded all the time," Harry said. "I think there are bigger crappies in the lower end."

Riding across the lake early in the morning the wind cut through my jacket and sweatshirt. The temperature must have dropped 10 degrees when we passed into the shadow of the steep mountain at the east side of the lake. Harry turned the boat toward a cluster of fallen trees and cut the motor about 100 feet from the bank so we could rig our lines. I put a chartreuse screw-tail on a 1/16-ounce red leadhead. Harry put a chartreuse-glitter tube body on a red leadhead.



*Crappies are cover-oriented fish, especially when they are in shallow water. The usual type of crappie cover at Raystown Lake is fallen trees. The better trees have a lot of small limbs. The thicker the cover, the better.*



"Let's try here before we go back in Snyder where my friend Joe said we should try. I think we might get bigger crappies out here in the main lake."

But if there were any crappies in the main lake, they were not cooperating. Conditions did not appear right. Though it was April 20, spring had been late after the harshest winter in 17 years. And we were in the sixth consecutive day with strong winds and clear skies. After losing a few jigs, we went to Snyder Run.

"Joe said there ought to be some crappies in there," Harry said as he pointed to a cluster of fallen trees.

I stuck my finger in the water. It did not seem any warmer there in one of the many small fingers of the big bay than in the very chilly main lake.

No fish showed interest in our jigs. But in that narrow bay out of the wind, the sun felt very nice. Wildlife liked it, too. Three deer fed along the hillside. Canada geese honked from a grassy point. Harry and I hooted like owls, trying to get a turkey gobbler to reply. Instead, two crows flew into the high limbs of an oak tree and scolded us.

"On the old lake when they quit hitting we'd spatter the water with gravel," Harry recalled.

Harry grew up in the area, and enjoyed excellent crappie fishing in the older, much smaller lake that was replaced in 1972 by the current impoundment.

"They have a method down South of using cane poles to beat the top of the water. I don't know whether it's supposed to simulate a feeding frenzy or what."

Our efforts at Snyder Run were fruitless, so we decided to motor up the lake to Coffee Run. As we idled out of the bay, Harry told a story about a friend who had a home on the old lake. He had a long dock because the water was shallow in front of his place. Off the end of the dock he sank Christmas trees.

"One day we would go there and catch nothing but crappies. The next time all I would catch would be largemouth bass."

Harry and I have chased crappies together all over Pennsylvania and the Northeast. We do not admit defeat easily, especially not on Harry's home lake. Noon passed while we boated between the ends of the lake. The sun was high in the unblemished blue sky. The wind remained brisk. The water was only barely warming. It would have been hard to pick a worse time to catch crappies.

We cut our trip to Coffee Run a bit short. The run was cold, and the chop constantly battered us with frigid spray. We had launched at Seven Points, the perfect place to put us in the middle of the water we wanted to fish, yet Coffee Run was a long way to run in those conditions.

At James Creek Run the water had more color, and it was noticeably warmer than at Snyder Run. That improved my confidence. Our results did not immediately get better, though. We did not get the slightest hint of a strike until we reached another area that Harry's friend Joe had suggested. There we decided to play the game out to the end by varying our methods instead of our location.

Lure color is more important in crappie fishing, I believe, than in most other fishing. Sure, sometimes it seems they will hit anything. Anyone can catch them then. When crappies get fussy is when you separate the real crappie enthusiasts from the bait-drowners.

Our crappie tackle boxes overflow with jigs and jig bodies of every imaginable color, shade, shape and size, maybe to the point of being silly. For the most part my fishing philosophy leans toward keeping things simple. Probably I take crappies



photo: Mike Bleech

*Much more important to fishing success than the species of bait minnow is the liveliness of the minnows. Try to do business with a bait dealer who keeps his tanks clean. Avoid fungus-covered minnows. Then do your part by not overcrowding your bait, keeping the water cool, and using an aerator.*

more seriously than most anglers, as does Harry. And why not? They are scrappy on light tackle, tasty and relatively abundant. Compared to other fishes, you can expect success much more often, but not without effort. We tried a broad assortment of jigs before finding the right combination.

As I let a brown-and-orange tube body on a 1/16-ounce leadhead sink alongside a tree top near the middle of the back bay, I felt a faint tick and lifted the rod tip firmly. I was rewarded by a deep bend in the ultralight rod, and a throbbing at the end of the line. Our first crappie of the day was nothing to brag about, but it was a start.

## Patterns

It took Harry and me a few hours to accomplish it, but finally we established a fish-catching pattern that provided enough crappies for dinner. Like most good crappie waters the fishing can be easy at Raystown, but as crappie waters go, fishing is challenging here.

Several important factors make up fishing patterns. The first you should be aware of for spring crappie fishing at Raystown Lake is water temperature. Springtime crappie activity has a lot to do with the water temperature. If you have the luxury of fishing quite often, try to time your crappie fishing when the water temperature is climbing. Nothing shuts down the crappie fishing quicker than a downward reversal in the water temperature.

Next, look for the warmer water in the lake. Generally this is at the upper end of the lake. The guidelines for locating the warmer springtime water in lakes is that shallow water warms



# CRAPPIES

quicker than deeper, cloudy water warms quicker than clear, water warms more quickly over a dark bottom than over light bottom, and water warms more quickly over soft bottom than over hard bottom. Particularly in reservoirs such as Raystown, look for warmer water at the mouths of tributaries. That is, unless there has just been a late snow. In this case stay away from the tributaries.

In Raystown Lake, you can expect to find the warmer water during the first few weeks of spring toward the heads of the bays off the upper half of the lake. Look in the area of Beaver Creek, Coffee Run or James Creek.

The timing for this part of the pattern varies from year to year. You might find good crappie fishing here as soon as mid-March, and it might last through May. It gets under way about as soon as the water begins warming. When the backs of the bays have a surface temperature over 40 degrees, there should be something happening, somewhere.

As this temperature is reached toward the lower end of the lake, you might find good crappie fishing among the maze of bays in the Snyder Run area. Then finally, sometime in May, you will find the last of the hot spring crappie fishing in the main body of the lake. Action in the shallower bays will be tapering off. Most of the lake regulars wind up their serious crappie fishing in the bays.

It is popular to speak and write of fishing "peaks." In this case the term "peak" might be misleading. Fishing can be excellent anytime from early spring through mid-June while crappies are near shore before their spawn, taking advantage of the better feeding opportunities in shallower, warmer water. The reason fishing is good is because the crappies are relatively easy to find.

The best fishing is soon after crappies move into the shallow water, before their numbers are trimmed by anglers. Anglers creel a good portion of the "keeper size" crappies each spring.

Cover is another important factor in determining a crappie fishing pattern. Crappies are cover-oriented fish, especially when they are in shallow water. The usual type of crappie cover at Raystown Lake is fallen trees. The better trees have a lot of small limbs. The thicker the cover is, the better.

Trunks sticking to the fallen tops point the good cover out to anyone.

Crappie populations vary considerably. During the better years, if you find good cover in the right water temperature, the odds are excellent that you have found crappies. But during the off years you might have to check several fallen trees before finding a congregation of crappies. Or you might have to keep moving, catching one or two from a tree here and there, covering a lot of water to make a nice catch.

The third critical factor in a crappie pattern is determining the right lure or bait. No matter how good one lure or bait might have been for you at one time, do not get the impression that you have discovered the lure or bait that will catch crappies any time they are feeding. It just ain't so!

A good argument might be made for the relative merits of dunking minnows for crappies. The usual way to do this is suspending the minnows under floats very close to cover. With a bobber you can precisely control depth, once the best depth is determined.

When the crappies are deeper than eight feet, roughly, or shallower in cloudy water, you might do better by positioning a boat right over the crappies and fishing vertically. This is a good tactic once you have located good crappie cover, but a reversal in the weather has driven the crappies deeper. "Deeper" usually does not require a lot of movement along the steep sides of Raystown Lake. Depth can be a key factor.

What kind of minnows? I use some sort of shiners if I can get them. Fatheads are just fine, though, and generally easier to find at bait shops.

Much more important than the species of bait minnow is the liveliness of the minnows. Try to do business with a bait dealer who keeps his tanks clean. Avoid fungus-covered minnows. Then do your part by not overcrowding your bait, keeping the water cool, and using an aerator.

A bait-keeping system I like is using a cooler—an ice chest—to carry the bait. Then at the end of the day, I carry the catch on ice in the cooler. This is especially good on hot days because the cooler insulates the bait water. You can carry ice in the cooler, in a separate compartment, to further cool the water. Then when you finish fishing and empty the water, put the ice in the main compartment and put the catch on ice. You will notice a great improvement in the eating quality of your crappies if you have been allowing them to get warm before cleaning them.

Sometimes jigs out-fish live minnows. There are two reasons for this. One is that the jig is moving, so it is far more likely to get close enough to be seen by crappies than a stationary minnow. (Of course, you can move minnows, too.) Visibility is also the second reason, though in a different way. The color of jigs can attract crappies. Of all the sport fish in Raystown Lake, color is probably more important to crappie fishing than to any other fish.

Perhaps I go overboard by carrying so many different jig bodies. At any given time I probably have six or eight different body styles in 20 or 30 colors and patterns. I could easily narrow that down to chartreuse, though I need opaque chartreuse, translucent chartreuse, and chartreuse/glitter, white, blue/glitter, purple, orange/brown, black, red, green in several shades and in combination with glitter.

Well, maybe I could *not* narrow down my jig body selection.

Chartreuse is a good color to start the day with, or anytime when the light is not bright. White is another good lure for early or late in the day. Blue/glitter, green, purple and brown are good midday colors. Think natural colors in clear water under a bright sky. When the water is cloudy, brown/orange, black, fluorescent orange and fluorescent red are good colors.

When the crappies quit hitting, don't assume that the action is over. Experiment with different colors, try a jig-and-minnow combination, add a grub or scent to a jig, or perhaps go deeper with a tiny jigging spoon.

One of the nicest things about crappies is that they are quite cooperative. There is usually some combination of water temperature, cover and lure—a pattern—that will put a throbbing bend in your fishing rod.





*Blue/glitter, green, purple and brown are good midday jig colors. Chartreuse is a good color to start the day with, or anytime when the light is not bright. White is another good lure for early or late in the day. Think natural colors in clear water under a bright sky. When the water is cloudy, brown/orange, black, fluorescent orange and fluorescent red are good colors.*



*Probably I take crappies more seriously than most anglers, as does Harry. And why not? They are scrappy on light tackle, tasty and relatively abundant. Compared to other fishes, you can expect success much more often, but not without effort.*



# PENNSYLVANIA'S TOP FIVE HATCHES

by Charles R. Meek

It happened more than 30 years ago on Bowman Creek in north-eastern Pennsylvania. Dick Mills and I hit the stream one late April afternoon. What transpired after I arrived would change my way of fly fishing forever. We fly fished a section of this productive freestone stream that locals call the "Barn Pool." For a frustrating hour we tried more than a half-dozen wet fly patterns with not even one strike for our effort. Not one trout rose and the stream looked void of any trout.

Shortly after noon a few large, dark mayflies appeared on the surface. The 50-degree air temperature and cloudy day contributed to what was to become a memorable fishing trip. Those mayflies that did appear had difficulty taking flight and rode on the surface for some distance. Soon more mayflies joined the first few and a major hatch unfolded within minutes. The calm surface on the lower end of the fly-fishing-only stretch in front of us instantly came alive with more than a dozen rising trout. Trout rose for the first time that season to this prolific hatch of hendricksons.

Dick Mills and I caught many of those rising trout on size 14 Red Quill patterns. For almost a week after that initial encounter we hit this same hendrickson on that stretch of stream. That hendrickson hatch on Bowman Creek inaugurated my pursuit of fishing the hatches.

You'll find more than hendricksons throughout the state. Pennsylvania trout waters hold a wide variety of excellent hatches. From early April through early October you can fish when aquatic insects appear on streams in almost every area of the state. Some hatches seem more productive than others—with some you catch more trout than others. Certain hatches yield more feeding trout.

Since that initial introduction to fishing the hatches, I've developed a list of prerequisites that I use to determine the best. To rate as a good hatch, it should (1) be common, (2) be heavy, (3) be fairly large, (4) bring trout to the surface, (5) rest on the surface for a while, and (6) emerge for at least four or five days. Let's look at each criterion.

The mayfly should be fairly common throughout the state. The great speckled olive dun appears in mid-April on Clarks Creek north of Harrisburg. It's large, brings trout to the surface, and emerges for a week. But I haven't found this hatch on any other stream in the state. Conversely, you'll see my five favorite hatches in almost every region of the state.

The mayfly should appear in good numbers. Look at the green drake hatch on Penns Creek or the sulphur hatch on Spring Creek, both in central Pennsylvania. When these mayflies appear, they do so in enormous numbers—heavy enough to bring trout to the surface to feed.



*Green drake*

*On cool, overcast days, green drake duns sometimes emerge sporadically all day long. Fishing to occasional risers in the morning and afternoon produces exciting results. You're not competing for the rising trout's attention with hundreds of naturals on the surface.*





Angler with a brown trout caught during a sulphur hatch. From late May on, the sulphur usually appears at dusk. Be ready for spinner falls at the same time.

A good hatch should be fairly large. The small white fly anglers often call the *caenis* also appears in heavy numbers on many streams. It's so small that I've seen few trout feed on it. The trico measures just slightly larger than the *caenis*, but what it lacks in size it often makes up in numbers.

The hatch should rest on the surface for a while. On many Pennsylvania trout streams, pale morning duns (*Heptagenia* species) appear just about every summer evening. But these mayflies escape quickly from the surface and few trout ever feed on them.

The final criterion is that the hatch should appear for at least four or five days. When the brown drake appears on Pennsylvania streams, it can create some great matching-the-hatch opportunities. But the hatch lasts only a few days. On Pine Creek I've seen duns emerge on a Monday evening and the majority of spinners fall on Tuesday or Wednesday evening.

Most hatches I've listed in the top five in the state appear in heavy numbers. But some hatches that even appear sporadically can produce some great matching-the-hatch experiences. Look at the march brown/gray fox. These large mayflies emerge in the heaviest numbers the last week-and-a-half of May. These mayflies begin appearing sometimes as early as 10:00 a.m., but heaviest hatches appear in the afternoon and early evening. I've lumped these two well-known hatches together because entomologists have recently grouped them as one. I still see a difference between the two mayflies, but scientists claim they're the same. I recently asked several fly fishing friends what they considered their top five hatches in the state, and they included hatches like the slate drake and trico. My five top favorites include the sulphur, hendrickson, the early blue quill, green drake and gray fox.

REMEMBER THIS STRATEGY WHEN FISHING THE HENDRICKSON HATCH: YOU'LL OFTEN FIND JUST A FEW TROUT RISING IN EACH POOL AND RIFFLE. MOVE TO ANOTHER SECTION NEARBY AND LOOK FOR OTHER SURFACING TROUT.



The gray fox emerges around May 15. Try imitations in sizes 12 and 14.





*March brown dun*



## Hendrickson

I met Ken and Kathy Rictor, of Chambersburg, on Fishing Creek in Clinton County on April 28 several years ago. Ken had just begun fly fishing and wanted to experience a great hatch and trout rising to it. Where do you take someone who wants to experience some of the early season hatches? You'll find no better place than many of the state's northcentral streams. Streams like the First Fork of the Sinnemahoning, Kettle, and Loyalsock creeks hold great early season hatches.

Fishing Creek, near Lamar, also holds many of the early season hatches. Over the past 20 years I can't remember an April afternoon when I didn't encounter a hatch on the Narrows section of this stream. Often I've seen three and four separate hatches competing for the attention of rising trout.

The three of us arrived at Fishing Creek shortly before noon. Early season hatches often appear from late morning until mid-afternoon. As we stepped out of the car, Ken noted several trout rising along the far shore. I scanned the surface looking for insects. As I looked upstream I saw hundreds of fairly small, dazed mayflies too cold under this cloudy April sky to take flight. Now more trout came to the surface to take advantage of this early season bonanza. I captured a dun and quickly handed Ken a size 18 Blue Quill to copy the hatch. This mayfly doesn't attain the size of some of the other hatches, but its sheer intensity and duration often make up for its smaller dimensions. The blue quill hatch lasted for three hours before it finally petered out that afternoon.

Around 1:00 p.m. a second heavy hatch appeared. The hendrickson presented a much larger profile to the trout, and a pod of at least a dozen trout took up feeding positions 20 feet above Ken Rictor. Ken first cast a conventional dry fly over the risers, then one with a shuck. He finally hooked one trout, then another. The hatch continued heavily until 4:00 p.m. with trout freely rising throughout the pool and riffle.

I said earlier that one of the criteria for a hatch to be on my top five list was that it had to appear on many streams in the Commonwealth. The hendrickson does just that. Jack Mickiewicz and I scheduled a trip to upper Pine Creek just above Galetton several years ago. We agreed to meet on the stream at noon. I got a head start and fished the same section the day before and hit a tremendous hatch of hendricksons. By the time Jack arrived, hendricksons already appeared sporadically. The cool April day held them on the surface for a longer period than normal. Each pool and riffle section of upper Pine held a half-dozen rising trout.

After Jack and I cast over all the risers in one pool, we raced upstream to a new section where other trout rose. Remember this strategy when fishing the hendrickson hatch: You'll often find just a few trout rising in each pool and riffle. Move to another section nearby and look for other surfacing trout.

## Gray Fox/March Brown

Fish in the afternoon or early evening on the upper Delaware, Pine Creek north of Waterville, the Little Juniata River, or Penns Creek the third or fourth week in May and you'll probably see a large yellowish-brown mayfly appearing. This mayfly, the March brown, doesn't appear in the numbers that you associate with the early blue quill, hendrickson or the green drake. It appears more sporadically and does so over a longer part of the day.

# STREAMS LIKE THE FIRST FORK OF THE SINNEMAHONING, KETTLE, AND LOYALSOCK CREEKS HOLD GREAT EARLY SEASON HATCHES.

Pine Creek, just above Waterville just a few years ago had one of the most productive gray fox hatches in the state. Some acid drainage in its tributaries has reduced the hatch recently. Fred Templin and I met at the Cemetery Pool just a few miles upstream from Waterville. We arrived shortly after noon to a cool, windy, somewhat high stream.

Already trout rose in the riffle entering the long deep pool. Frequent large gray foxes paraded down the far side, waiting until their wings dried sufficiently until they attempted to take flight. Occasionally, trout rose in the riffle and the pool to stragglers. The less-than-concentrated hatch continued unabated for more than four hours that afternoon, and trout added immeasurably to the event by rising the entire time. Before the hatch ended Fred and I landed and released more than 30 trout on size 12 Gray Fox imitations.

## Green Drake

When anglers think of the green drake they normally think of Penns Creek. Annually thousands of fly fishers trek to that fabled central Pennsylvania limestone stream to fish this spectacular hatch in late May or early June. But more than 50 other streams and rivers in the state hold this same hatch. Granted, you won't find it with the intensity of Penns Creek, but even when a few of these large mayflies appear, trout often lose their timidity.

You often see two problems when you fish this hatch. On Penns Creek it's often difficult to compete with the seemingly endless supply of drake duns and spinners. I've already quit in disgust during the height of a spinner fall because entirely too many spent-winged naturals covered the surface. What chance did I have with my spinner imitation when the trout had such a huge selection of naturals?

There's often a second perplexing complication with this hatch. I've forgotten the number of times when green drakes and sulphurs emerged concurrently and trout ignored the larger fly and took the smaller sulphur natural. I've watched countless green drake hatches on the Little Juniata River and saw trout keying in on the smaller sulphur rather than the larger green drake. I actually watched 10 different trout feed on the surface one afternoon and noted only one taking green drake duns and nine seizing sulphurs.

The green drake hatch on Penns, Fishing, Kettle and Yellow creeks and on the Little Juniata River brings out hordes of fly fishers. I often avoid this fishing pressure and visit one of the other 45 streams in the state that holds a decent hatch. Trout



**A TERRIFIC HATCH HAS THE  
CAPABILITY OF BRINGING  
TROUT TO THE SURFACE FOR AN  
EXTENDED PERIOD. THE SULPHUR  
HATCH, WHICH INCLUDES SEVERAL  
SULPHUR-COLORED MAYFLY  
SPECIES, CAN DO JUST THAT!  
A GREAT HATCH SHOULD APPEAR  
FOR A WEEK OR MORE.  
THE SULPHUR DOES THAT, TOO!**



sometimes seem to feed better on green drakes on streams that have a less than spectacular hatch.

The Driftwood Branch of Sinnemahoning Creek, near Emporium, also holds a great green drake hatch in early June. Several years ago Craig Hudson, Mark Campbell, Don Perry, Tom Barton and I fished during this hatch in the delayed-harvest section. Hundreds of duns appeared shortly after 8:00 p.m. and trout fed all around us. All five of us became confused with the hatch because trout refused our dun patterns. Not until one of us sank the Green Drake dry fly did any of us catch a trout. After that, all of us began purposely dunking our dry flies and all began catching trout.

Green drake duns emerge and spinners fall usually near dusk. On Penns Creek and the Little Juniata River, especially on cool overcast days, duns sometimes emerge sporadically all day long. I find that fishing to sporadic risers in the morning and afternoon produces some exciting results. You're not competing for the rising trout's attention with hundreds of naturals on the surface.

## **Sulphur**

John Norris, of Massachusetts, called me back in 1978. He had just read *Meeting and Fishing the Hatches* and wanted to sample some of Pennsylvania's great hatches. John complained that where he lived he seldom experienced any explosive hatches. We set a fishing date for late May so John could experience some of the state's finest hatches.

John arrived in central Pennsylvania on May 25 and we immediately headed out to Spring Creek. We arrived at the stream at 4:00 p.m. and already saw trout rising and sulphurs emerging. For the first couple of days that sulphurs appear every year, they often do so for several hours in the afternoon. If you're fortunate enough to hit the stream when this protracted hatch appears, you're in for some great matching-the-hatch enjoyment. For three hours that late afternoon and early evening John caught trout rising to a hatch. Never before had he seen such hatch intensity. Never before had John encountered so many rising trout. A terrific hatch has the capability of bringing trout to the surface for an extended period. The sulphur hatch, which includes several sulphur-colored mayfly species, can do just that! A great hatch should appear for a week or more. The sulphur does that, too!

Once the sulphur begins appearing, it usually does so for two weeks or more. From late May on, the sulphur usually appears at dusk. Be prepared for spinner falls at the same time.

Many of the productive limestone streams in the state boast great hatches of sulphurs. Freestone streams like Fishing Creek (Columbia County), First Fork of the Sinnemahoning Creek, East Fork Bowman Creek, and many others also hold dependable late-May hatches.

## **Blue Quill**

Bryan Meck and I fly fished on the Little Bald Eagle two days after the season opened. We started fly fishing just below where Vanscoyac Run enters the stream. A cold wind blew from the north and the stream seemed totally void of any trout. Shortly before noon a few small, dark mayflies began appearing on some of the riffles. Within a half-hour trout began feeding on the first food supply of the season. For almost three hours that hatch continued unabated. Trout continued to feed on struggling duns as we headed away from the stream. Bryan had a late-afternoon class at nearby Penn State University, so we had to leave.

Talk about common, heavy hatches—the early blue quill fits the bill. It usually appears just about the time the trout season opens and continues for two weeks. The hatch is the smallest of my five favorites, copied by a size 18 Blue Quill. But this species makes up in numbers what it loses in size. You'll find great early blue quill hatches in almost every part of the state. On many streams it's the heaviest, most dependable hatch of the season. On Oil, Big Bushkill, White Deer and Fishing (Clinton County) creeks it's one of the most reliable hatches of the entire season. Fishing Creek's hatch sometimes lasts for more than two weeks.

The blue quill, green drake, gray fox, sulphur and hendrickson make up my top five list for many reasons. Probably most important to me is my memorable experiences with each of these hatches. Fishing friends like Craig Josephson and Paul Antolosky have other favorite hatches like the trico, slate drake, blue-winged olive dun, light cahill and brown drake. But my memories with my favorite hatches will forever keep them near the top.



# Griffith's Gnat

by Chauncy K. Lively  
photos by the author

In the lexicon of fly fishing the common names of insects are often a source of confusion for the uninitiated. In Pennsylvania the Shad Fly is a name often used to identify the Green Drake mayfly, but in other locales of the Northeast the same name is applied to a caddis fly. When Midwestern anglers speak of the Giant Michigan Caddis they are really referring to the mayfly *Hexagenia limbata*. And in western states the term "Salmon Fly" may have different meanings to different anglers. That's not all. Even such supposedly common insects as gnats may present a hazy picture.

The Black Gnat is one of fly fishing's oldest fly patterns. It was a favorite of Charles Cotton, who was a frequent angling companion of Izaak Walton, and in fact, Cotton wrote the Second Part of Walton's *The Compleat Angler*. The insect in the British Isles that the Black Gnat represents is *Bibio jolannis*, of the Order Diptera. It is related to and roughly resembles *Bibio femoratus*, which Pennsylvanian Charles Wetzel called the Red-Legged March Fly. Both the English and Pennsylvania insects are substantially larger than the tiny bugs we generally think of as gnats. However, there are certain minute insects in England—some of which are not much larger than a pinhead—which are also regarded as gnats. To add to the confusion, in the British Isles the female spinner of *Ephemera danica*—the Green Drake of the chalk streams—is often referred to as the "Spent Gnat."

Gnats and midges are sometimes combined into a single category of insects, and this is unfortunate because the two are distinctly different.



Both are Dipterans, but midges are Chironomids, mosquito-like in appearance with long legs, thin bodies and narrow wings. On the other hand, gnats have shorter legs, stubbier bodies with ill-defined segments and proportionately broader wings.

The gnats of Hilara, or Dance Flies, as they are often called, are important to fly fishermen. In summer they appear in swarms over many streams, flying in a curious figure-8 pattern. Many mating pairs drop to the water and are eagerly taken by trout.

Small, dark, wingless or semi-spent patterns without tails are the order of the day when Dance Flies are on the water. I

George Griffith is recognized as one of the principal prime movers who founded Trout Unlimited. Although he disclaims origination of Griffith's Gnat, it was he who modified the pattern to its present form. With its contrasty grizzly hackle it is fairly easy to see on the water, a distinct advantage in small flies. And lacking tails, which the pattern doesn't require for support or balance, it creates a tight, compact light pattern on the surface film similar to that of the naturals. Tails would tend only to distort and elongate the impression on the surface by forming a crease in the film behind the fly.

My only modification of the pattern is in the dressing and does not alter the appearance of the finished fly in any way. In the conventional dressing the hackle is tied in by its tip at the rear of the body and palmer-wrapped to a point behind the eye where it is tied off. I prefer to tie in the hackle by its butt behind the eye, dull side facing the eye, and reverse-palmer it over the body to the bend where it is tied off. Then, instead of whip-finishing at the hackle's tie-off, the thread is carefully wound forward through the wound hackle in spaced turns and whip-finished behind the eye. When winding the thread through the



A small fly, like a size 18 to 24 Griffith's Gnat, can fool a big trout.

palmered hackle, crushed barbules may be avoided by moving the bobbin from side to side during the procedure. Counter-wound with thread in this manner, it is virtually impossible for a trout's teeth to undo the hackle and body.

Despite the physical differences between gnats and midges, because of their small size and compressed light pattern, floating

have used several gnat patterns successfully, including the Fore-and-Aft Gnat I described on these pages in December 1971. However, one of the best known is Griffith's Gnat.

artificially representing both are often interchanged successfully. I dress Griffith's Gnat in sizes 20 to 24 for everyday use, but I keep a few 18s on hand for special situations.



# Griffith's Gnat



**1** Tie in the thread behind the eye and wind closely back to the bend.



**2** Match the tips of three peacock herls and tie them in at the bend about a shank length from the tips. Then hold the tips along the shank and wind over to a point behind the eye.



**3** Twist the herls together and wrap them forward to form a body. Tie off behind the eye and trim the excess.

## Dressing: Griffith's Gnat

**Hook:** Size 18 to 24, fine wire.

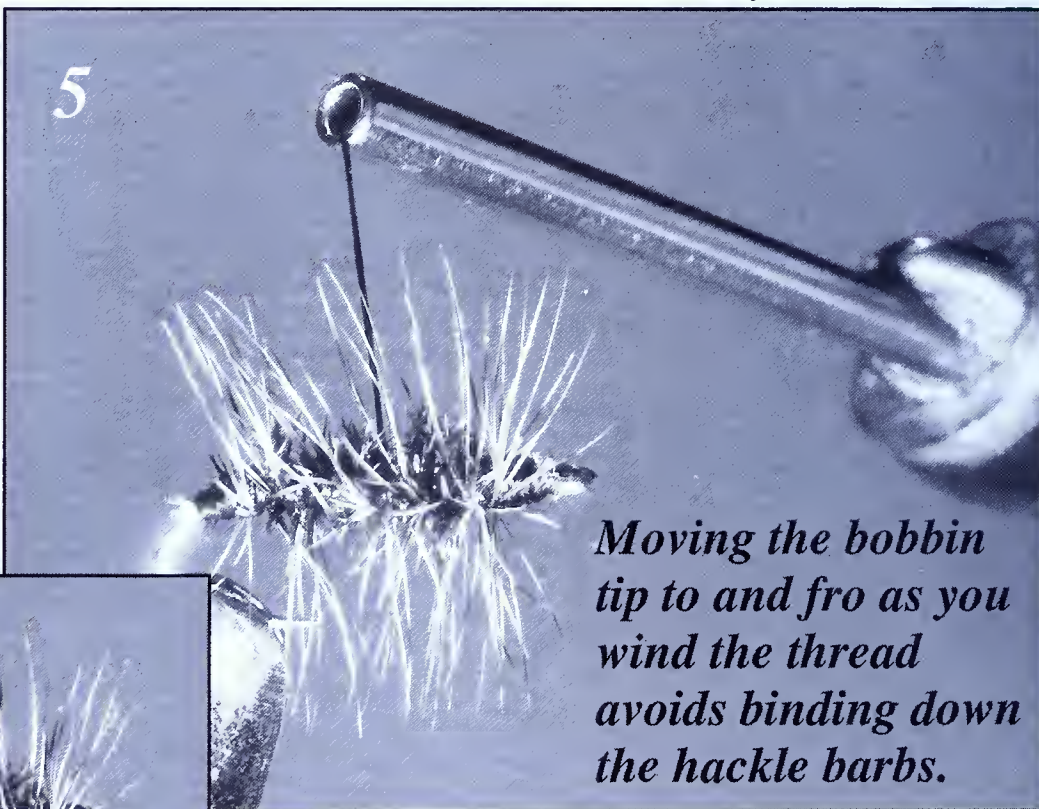
**Thread:** Black, size 8/0.

**Body:** 3 peacock herls.

**Hackle:** Grizzly.



**4** Select a grizzly hackle with a barble length about 1 1/2 times the width of the gape. Remove the webby barbs at the butt end and tie in the stem at a right angle, on edge and with the dull side toward the eye. Bend the end of the stem forward, bind it down with three turns and cut off the excess stem. Spiral the thread back over the body in spaced turns to the bend.



*Moving the bobbin tip to and fro as you wind the thread avoids binding down the hackle barbs.*



**5** Clamp the hackle pliers to the tip of the hackle and make one full turn in front of the body. Then wind in spaced turns to the bend. Tie off with three turns and trim the excess hackle tip.

**6** Wind the thread forward in spaced turns through the wound hackle, moving the bobbin tip to and fro to avoid binding down the hackle barbs. After whip-finishing and lacquering the head, Griffith's Gnat is completed.



A person wearing a green jacket and a straw hat is fishing in a stream. The person's hands are visible, holding a fishing rod and a net. A large trout is being pulled out of the water into the net. The background shows the rippling water of the stream.

# Stickbaiting TROUT

*by Darl Black*

When Bill Logan asked me to go trout fishing last April, I figured it was some kind of a joke. For several years Bill, a longtime bass fishing buddy, had been telling me of his success with trout in the spring using stickbaits, also known as long minnow plugs. Much of his trout fishing takes place in March and April on special-regulation stream sections with no closed season.





## Stickbaiting TROUT

However, when Bill finally invited me along to show me how he did it, all streams were flowing extremely high and dirty. Several severe thunderstorms had passed through the area during the week. Many creeks were on a flood watch. Under these conditions Bill called with an invitation.

"Who you kidding?" I prodded. "You don't really expect to catch trout, do you?"

"Sunday is the only day I can go in the next couple of weeks, and yes, I am sure we can connect with a few trout on the delayed-harvest section of Oil Creek. I checked the creek last night. It's looking just right to me. The water is high and fast, but not over the banks. It's stained, but not actually muddy. It's water that will crimp the style of the bug boys, but it's perfect for my technique. You in or out?"

I paused, waiting to see if he was going to say "Only joking." He didn't. Figuring we would be lucky to catch a single trout in these conditions, I realized I was going to have to commit anyway. If I said no, I might not get another invitation.

"Okay, I'm in," I told him. Logan set 9:00 a.m. as the time to meet and the fly-fishing shop in Oil Creek State Park as the place.

### On the stream

Even though it was the second day of trout season, as I drove to the meeting place the next morning I saw only a half-dozen anglers in the six- or seven-mile stretch below the special-regulation area. The parking lot near the fly shop was practically empty. "Well, most fishermen know enough to stay home today," I mumbled to myself as I left the car and walked up to the shop.

On greeting shop proprietor Mike Laskowski, I informed him of my intention to fish the creek. "Figured even a bass fisherman would know better than to go trout fishing with the stream in this shape," he replied.

*Logan emphasizes that the stickbait technique works in all types of streams during the cold-water period, taking browns, brookies and rainbows. It remains effective until mid-May, when flows are reduced and water becomes clearer.*

Lacking a witty repartee, I simply shrugged my shoulders. At that moment, Logan came through the door with a trout carving in hand. In addition to being an elementary school art teacher by profession and serious angler, Logan is also a magazine illustrator and wooden fish carver. As soon as his latest creation was critiqued by Laskowski, we pulled on our waders and headed toward the stream.

Our route was across the bridge, south on the railroad tracks and down a steep embankment to the water's edge. While I fumbled with rod and camera, Bill made his first cast. Before I had the camera strap untangled from my shoulder satchel, Bill was shouting, "Fish on!"

The rod bowed under a big fish. Bill kept the rod tip skyward as he worked the fish toward shore.

I offered him my net. He refused. But when I expressed concern the fish might be lost before a photo was taken, he grudgingly accepted the net.

While attempting to slip the net under the fish, one treble hook snagged the mesh. The brown trout seized the opportunity, and with a body twist, pulled free of the plug. I did, however, manage to capture the moment on film.

Bill stared at me and said, "That's one reason I don't use nets!"

"Hey, this is a catch-and-release area," I teased. "So what if the fish self-released? It wasn't going home for dinner. Besides, I got a great picture."

"It doesn't count as a caught fish unless I actually touch it," moaned Logan.



A fish on the first cast is regarded as a bad omen by many anglers. I figured we had seen the only trout of the day, just as I had predicted.

Bill, on the other hand, remained optimistic. He relentlessly shot cast after cast across the stream as we carefully worked the stretch downstream. In the next hour he hooked several more trout, although not all were landed. The action was so fast, I rarely managed a cast between reaching for the camera. Given the conditions, I was impressed with his catch.

### How does he do it?

A gregarious individual, Logan loves to talk fishing and share information with others.

"Basically, I'm a bass fisherman at heart, not a trout fisherman," says Logan proudly. "A few years back I heard nice fish were being caught in mid-March on the Oil Creek delayed-harvest section. The lakes were still frozen solid, so I figured I didn't have anything to lose and gave it a try one weekend.

"I started flinging typical trout spinners and tiny spoons, but only caught one small trout. I could see much larger fish flash at my lures occasionally. When I tied on a stickbait and fiddled with different retrieves, suddenly those curiosity flashes turned into solid strikes."

Logan experimented with minnow plugs, trying every popular stickbait pattern. He settled on a gold/black-back lure as the most effective offering.

"You have heard some anglers claim gold is great for dark conditions, silver or rainbow trout pattern for clear water, and maybe chartreuse for muddy water," says Logan. "But for me, it's gold/black back—day in and day out, under any water level, in any water color."

The size of the stickbait is important, too. Most of the time he uses lures that measure 2 3/4 inches. Logan believes that particular model is representative of typical baitfish that big stream trout feed on. He is convinced big trout are a lot more interested in baitfish during the spring than little bugs. If the trout seem particularly aggressive, he switches to a larger lure. Under other special circumstances he may select a smaller or larger stickbait.

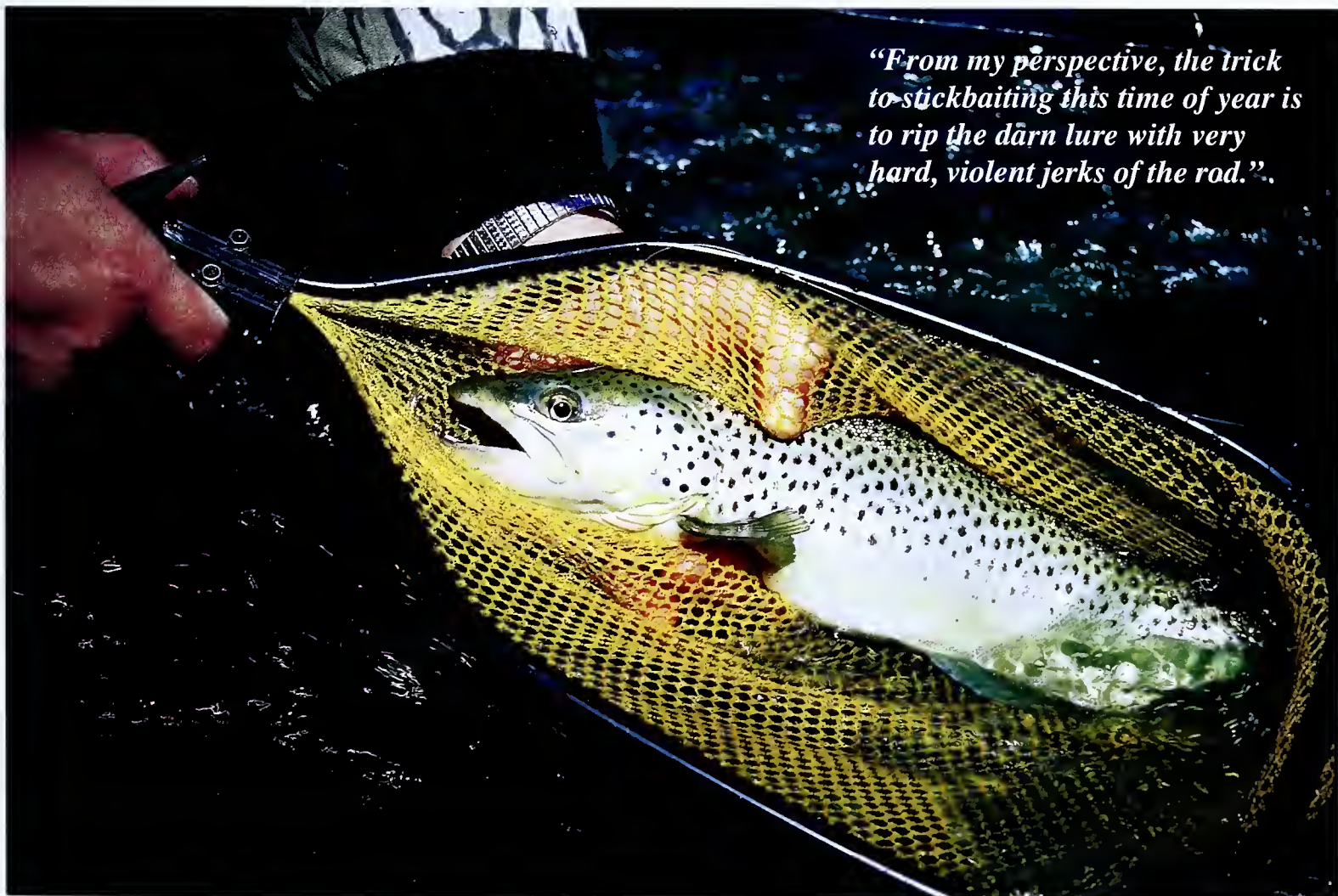
Even though other fishermen may throw the same stickbait with little success, Logan recognizes that it is his unorthodox retrieve that catches fish.

"From my perspective, the trick to stickbaiting this time of year is to rip the darn thing with very hard, violent jerks of the rod," says Logan. "When fishing big water, I make casts at a 90-degree angle to the current. In other words, I cast directly across the stream. As soon as the plug settles on the water, I make a turn or two of the reel handle to take up slack. Then I rip the lure with the rod so it dives 1 1/2 to two feet.

"From that point on, I merely let the current sweep the lure downstream as I continue to rip the bait every few feet. The rip translates to about a three-foot movement of the rod tip—it's far more than a twitch or snap. It is important to keep a tight line. However, the current pretty much takes care of that. I do not attempt to retrieve any line until the lure is straight downstream from me."

Most hits occur as the current sweeps the minnow bait in a semicircle around his position. If the lure arrives directly downstream without a strike, Logan begins a rip-twitch-pause retrieve to return the lure upstream.

Even though most stream anglers think that a lure must be presented with the current, Logan finds that strikes occur of-



*"From my perspective, the trick to stickbaiting this time of year is to rip the darn lure with very hard, violent jerks of the rod."*





When he started this spring technique a few years ago, Logan used a five-foot ultralight. But he quickly discovered his ultralight did not have the backbone to fight a big trout in heavy current. Today he prefers a six-foot, light-action spinning rod rated for 1/8-ounce to 1/4-ounce lures and spooled with six-pound test.

Logan does not usually use a landing net. Instead, he plays the fish until it lays quietly on the surface beside him. Then he cradles the fish in his left hand, and with needle-nose pliers in his right hand, pops the treble hook free. The fish can be released without removing it from the water.

"If the water is warm and the level normal, a good fly fisherman can usually outfish me in numbers of fish," says Logan.

ten enough on the upstream retrieve to keep working the bait instead of just quickly reeling in for another cast. Logan points out that the shore edge is a slackwater holding area in spring high water.

"My primary target areas are deep-water midstream stretches with obstacles on the bottom that break the current," Logan says. "Good-size trout do not use the shallow riffles during the early spring. In cold water, large trout will not fight current. Instead, they hold in slower water. There may be fast current around them, but they seek current breaks. The trout will be hugging the bottom, usually in slack water behind a rock or log, or perhaps in the current break near the shore.

"Matter of fact, I frequently hang my lure on those logs and big rocks. Often the water is too deep or too swift to reach the lure, and I must break the line. Rarely does one of my lures survive an entire season."

Logan stresses the importance of understanding current to make an effective presentation. Even though the surface water appears too swift and powerful to be a trout holding area, the flow is less forceful near the bottom. It is vital to get the stickbait near the bottom. A trout will dart a short distance from its current break for a meal, but will not chase something that is moving too fast or too high in the current flow.

Whenever conditions are right, Logan uses a floating lure. But to keep a stickbait riding near the bottom in heavy flows during high-water periods, Logan switches to a sinking countdown lure. The rod position is slightly different for each type. With a floating lure, he jerks the rod tip downward to drive the bait deep.

"However, countdowns snag easily because they don't float off the bottom," says Logan. "Therefore, with a countdown model, I tend to keep the rod tip higher after the initial jerk, so the lure is pulled slightly upward on each rip. Otherwise I would snag the lure on every cast and lose a lot more stickbaits."

On large streams, Logan makes several casts from one position to ensure that he covers the area. All casts are at 90 degrees to the current, so the pattern is better described as "layering" instead of fan casting. He begins with a short cast, then a moderate one, and finally a long cast.

"But I catch the larger fish! Also, if the water is high and roiled, as it often is in the spring, then I completely blitz those guys who are fishing the funny fuzzy imitators with Latin names."

Logan emphasizes that the stickbait technique works in all types of streams during the cold-water period, taking browns, brookies and rainbows. It remains effective until mid-May, when flows are reduced and water becomes clearer.

Jerking stickbaits has taken trout from the Kinzua Dam tailrace as well as tiny tributary brooks. In the larger waters, such as the Allegheny River where trout are accustomed to larger prey, he recommends a larger lure. For the smaller brooks, he uses only a smaller lure. Also, when fishing the brooks, the stickbait is given a snap rather than a hard jerk.

## Back on the stream

As morning faded into early afternoon, Bill continued to rack up an occasional fish while fly fishermen sat befuddled on the bank. On what was to be his "next to last cast," he hung a good fish—a brownie well over 20 inches long. We both spotted a lamprey hanging on the fish at the same time.

"Don't lose the fish or the lamprey," I shouted. "I want a picture of that thing!"

"I've had lampreys on before in this stream," Logan said in an excited voice. "It will drop off as soon as I grab the fish."

"Use the net, use the net," I shouted.

Reluctantly he reached for the net, and positioned it in the water. As he attempted to lead the fish into the net, the lamprey brushed the rim and immediately dislodged itself from the fish. At the same instant, the brown surged straight ahead into the net, then out of the net and into the air, like an acrobat given a foot lift for a somersault. When the fish hit the water, Bill thrust the net toward the trout, but caught a treble hook—again. The brownie shook free and disappeared into the dingy water along with the lamprey.

Bill gave me another cold stare. "This darn net is history!" Then we both broke into laughter.

Stickbaits and coldwater trout. Be sure to give them a try. Only leave the net at home!



# On the Water

with Charles F. Waterman

## Social Trout

Trout have watched people for as long as people have watched trout, which is a very long time, indeed. It's no wonder they don't always flee in disorder at the sight of a tackle-bedecked human. When there are plenty of anglers, a trout learns to treat them the way he treats muskrats or thirsty cows. He stays out of their way but remains suspicious.

This shows up plainest on some famous and hard-fished creeks. There was one of those really good days on a busy stream when I was unable to convince a good friend that a trout can devour hatching flies five feet from him in plain sight and still be persnickity about the fakes.

"Why should I move?" he fussed. "They're still rising all around me. I can see them right here in front of me."

I went around the bend and had a really good day, not because I was such a hot fisherman but because the fish were really taking and I moved now and then. My friend had two strikes. Tame trout tend to be smart trout and I think they can read wader brands. Apparently they do not want to take something they figure belongs to you. In a creek with lots of anglers a fish has to feed near them or starve to death.

For years I sneaked around a typical spring creek with fish that tended to be too smart for me. When there was a hatch on, they tended to feed in pods and I'd generally get a fish from the first bunch I tried if I managed to get into the water without falling down and could get a fly to one without spooking one of his buddies. It was touchy business, but if I got the fly where it belonged, the pattern didn't have to be too exact. Then, having put that pod down, I'd move upstream to the next bunch, which was invariably much tougher, and the third pod would be almost impossible. Because I'm a little slow on such things, it took me some time to realize that the fish in the second and third pods were the same ones I had driven away from their first feeding spot and they were beginning to get a little spooky.

Now wild trout that have not been staring at humans daily are much easier to attract to a fly—but sloppy wading that a social trout would yawn at will send a wild fish into temporary retirement.

I have had a little trouble seeing things from a trout's viewpoint. For example, for some time I fished a creek that was visited regularly by cows. Then the fish-conscious owner fenced the cows out and I figured without all of that beef sloshing around in there, fishing would be much simpler, but I didn't understand. The earth all around the creek was the kind that shakes when you stomp on it.

The first season after the cows were fenced out, I discovered that the fish would quit rising when a human walked within 50 feet of the shore. When the cows had clumped around there, they had paid no attention. I'd always had that creek almost to myself. If there'd been more fishermen the trout would have learned to tolerate large feet on nearby territory—but then they



*When there are plenty of anglers, a trout learns to treat them the way he treats muskrats or thirsty cows. He stays out of their way but remains suspicious.*

might have gotten persnickity about fly patterns. I heard a man say that tame trout are wilder than wild trout and I have been thinking about that for some time.

In a hard-fished creek I once found myself facing downstream toward a bunch of rainbow trout that were obviously nymphing about 20 feet away. The light was right and I could have counted their scales if they had been carp. So I drifted an assortment of nymphs down to them and they politely inspected each one. Every time my nymph drifted down to them, a fish would appear to take it—but he didn't. Not even a sloppy presentation bothered them. They could see me and figured things were under control. After half an hour and some 30 inspections, I sneaked away to where the fish weren't so blasé.

I went to fish where a fairly busy highway ran right beside a creek, and I sought a bend where I could sneak away from the noise.

"Forget that," the local expert said. "They don't care how much fuss you make over by the road."

I used to work some sophisticated trout that fed in a bend. Evidently when not feeding the fish lived somewhere below where I'd cast from. If I bungled a cast they'd flush downstream. Invariably, one or two would run into my legs. If they're so smart, why was that?

ANGLER



# 1995

## EXPANDED

### Trout Fishing Opportunities

by Tom Greene

#### New Waters

**Cascade Quarry, Lawrence County.** The addition of this six-acre pond will provide more trout angling opportunities near a dense population center of northwestern Pennsylvania. Brook and brown trout will be planted for the traditional inseason period as well as during the fall and winter.

**Piney Creek, Clarion County.** A new 5.0-mile section of stream from the SR 2001 bridge downstream to the confluence with Little Piney Creek has been added to the catchable trout program for the 1995 season. This water is scheduled to receive a preseason planting of brook trout and an inseason stocking of brown trout.

**Janesville Dam, Clearfield County.** After a 10-year hiatus from catchable trout management, recent water quality improvement efforts have paved the way for this 10-acre impoundment to return to the catchable trout program in 1995. This water is scheduled to receive a preseason stocking of brook trout as well as a traditional inseason and fall planting of brook and brown trout.

**Spring Brook, Lackawana County.** A 3.4-mile section from Nesbitt Reservoir downstream to the pipeline crossing has been added to the catchable trout program. Brook and brown trout will be planted only inseason in 1995.

**Lofty Reservoir, Schuylkill County.** Located on Pennsylvania Game Commission property, this 32-acre lake has been approved for the catchable trout program in 1995. The reservoir is scheduled to receive a preseason stocking of brook trout and an inseason planting of brook and brown trout.

**Lower Promised Land Lake, Pike County.** This 173-acre impoundment has been approved for stocking in 1995. Preseason stocking of brook trout and inseason plantings of brook and brown trout will provide additional angling opportunity in this region of the Commonwealth.



*Halifax High School Conservation Club members float-stock Powell Creek, Dauphin County.*

**Unnamed Tributary to Stony Creek, Montgomery County.** Contiguous with the stocked portion of Stony Creek, a 1.0-mile segment of stream from SR 3006 downstream to the mouth has been approved for the catchable trout program. Inseason plantings of brown and rainbow trout have been scheduled for this water in 1995.

**Chester Creek, East Branch, Delaware County.** A new 4.0-mile section from the dam breast located upstream of T-331 downstream to the mouth will be added in 1995. This water will receive plantings of brown and rainbow trout on an inseason-only basis.

**Lake Marburg, York County.** The planting of catchable size rainbow trout on an inseason-only basis will commence in 1995. Catchable trout stocking will provide an immediate fishery and enhance the potential to develop a trophy coldwater component on this large two-story lake.

**Sewickley Creek, Big, Westmoreland County.** A new 2.4-mile section of stream from T-565 downstream to the confluence with Brinker Run will be added to the catchable trout program in 1995. This water is scheduled to receive preseason and inseason plantings of brown and rainbow trout.



# Some 44 waterways include new waters, expansions and extensions to trout fishing opportunities in 1995.

## Expansions

Classification changes and/or stocking limit extensions have led to an increased stocking program on the following waters: Willow Creek, McKean County; Bradford Reservoir #3, McKean County; Justus Lake, Venango County; Twin Lakes, Elk County; Mill Creek, Clarion County; West Creek, Cameron and Elk counties; Sixmile Run, Centre County; Pine Creek, Tioga County; Black Hole Creek, Lycoming County; Briar Creek Lake, Columbia County; Moon Lake, Luzerne County; Fishing Creek, West Branch, Sullivan County; Bushkill Creek, Monroe and Pike counties; Wallenpaupack Creek, West Branch, Lackawanna and Wayne counties; Angelica Lake, Berks County; Manatawny Creek, Berks County; French Creek, Chester County; Skippack Creek, Montgomery County; Perkiomen Creek, East Branch, Bucks County; Wissahickon Creek, Montgomery County; Chester Creek, West Branch, Delaware County; Buck Run, Chester County; Otter Creek, Lancaster County; Rabbit Run Reservoir, Schuylkill County; Pine Creek, Allegheny County; Northmoreland Lake, Westmoreland County; Clear Shade Creek, Somerset County; and Yellow Creek, Indiana County.

On behalf of the angling public, the Fish and Boat Commission extends a sincere thanks to the landowners for granting angler access to provide new waters and more angling opportunity.

## Delayed-harvest area extensions

**Neshannock Creek, Lawrence County.** During 1994, a 1.6-mile stretch of stream was added to the current area to encompass 2.7-miles of water from the base of the Mill Dam in Volant downstream to the covered bridge (T-476).

## New delayed-harvest areas

**Black Moshannon Creek, Centre County.** In cooperation with DER, Bureau of Forestry and Black Moshannon State Park, a 1.3-mile section of stream will be added to the delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only program in 1995. The new area is located from Dry Hollow downstream to 0.3 miles below the Huckleberry Road bridge.

**Wallenpaupack Creek, West Branch, Wayne County.** In cooperation with the private landowner, a 1.6-mile segment of stream will be added to the catchable trout program via delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only management in 1995. The new area extends from 0.6 miles downstream from the confluence with Jones Creek downstream to the SR 3009 bridge.

**Pickering Creek, Chester County.** In cooperation with Charlestown Township, a new 1.5-mile section of stream from SR 1019 downstream to 0.2 miles upstream from the railroad bridge has been opened to the general angling public under the delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only program in 1995.

**Pine Creek, Allegheny County.** In cooperation with private landowners as well as the Allison Park Sportsmen and the Tri County Trout Club, a 1.4-mile segment of stream will be added to the delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only program in 1995. The new area is located on the portion of stream from the abandoned railroad bridge near the T-575 and Duncan Avenue intersection downstream to 150 meters below the SR 4019 bridge.

**Laurel Hill Creek, Somerset County.** In cooperation with private landowners, a second delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only area will be added on Laurel Hill Creek in 1995. The new 1.2-mile section extends from the State Game Lands 111 bridge in Humbert downstream to the confluence of Paddytown Hollow Run.

## Management program changes

The following catchable trout-stocked waters, formerly managed under the fly-fishing-only program, will be managed under the delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only program in 1995. (\*denotes delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only management).

Conewago Creek, Adams County; Green Spring Creek, Cumberland County; Big Mill Creek, Elk County; Dunbar Creek, Fayette County; Antietam Creek, East Branch, Franklin County; Little Lehigh Creek, Lehigh County; Bushkill Creek, Monroe County; Clear Shade Creek, Somerset County; \*Butternut Creek, Wayne County; and Muddy Creek, York County.

## Early warning waters

**Jeans Run, Carbon County.** Chronic problems with stream acidification and subsequent declines in water quality have led to the removal of a 2.5-mile stretch of this stream from the catchable trout program in 1995. Formerly stocked preseason only, the 1994 spring water quality examinations confirmed that stream pH did not equal 6.0 even during the month of May.

**Codorus Creek, York County.** Posting and access problems have led to the removal of a 1.3-mile section of stream from the catchable trout program in 1995.

**Delaware Canal, Bucks County.** The drawdown of this water to facilitate dredging operations precludes catchable trout management for the 1995 season. On completion of this operation, catchable trout management will be reinstated either for the 1996 or 1997 season.

**Repine Run, Indiana County.** Chronic mine acid drainage problems have led to the removal of this small 1.7-mile section of stream from the catchable trout program.

**Turtle Creek, Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties.** Continual water quality problems associated with mine acid drainage preclude catchable trout management on this 3.9-mile segment of stream for the 1995 season.

## Loss of angling opportunities

Sections of streams listed below will receive a reduction in their allocation in 1995 because of an increase in the amount of landowner posting.

Mill Creek, Berks and Lebanon counties; and Conowingo Creek, Lancaster County.

The following sections will receive a reduction in their allocation in 1995 because of water quality problems associated with mine acid drainage.

Twolick Creek, South Branch, Indiana County; and Glade Run, Armstrong County.





# Pennsylvania Hatch Chart

by Charles R. Meck

Scientists call it *phenology*. To the angler it might mean comparing the time of year a mayfly hatches with flowers that bloom at the same time. Below-normal temperatures in spring and summer often delay the time a hatch appears. These low temperatures also delay the times when certain plants flower. Above-normal temperatures might hasten the times hatches and flowers appear. For example, dame's rocket first begins to bloom in mid-May. At the same time you can expect to see Gray Foxes and March Browns appear. Here is a list of some of Pennsylvania's major hatches and flowers that appear concurrently.



Hatch	Scientific Name	Approximate Date	Flower Blooming Hatch Appears
Little Blue-Winged Olive Dun	<i>Baetis tricaudatus</i>	April 1	Coltsfoot
Blue Quill	<i>Paraleptophlebia adoptiva</i>	April 15	Forsythia in full bud
Quill Gordon	<i>Epeorus pleuralis</i>	April 18	Forsythia just opening
Hendrickson	<i>Ephemerella subvaria</i>	April 20	Forsythia open
Sulphur	<i>Ephemerella rotunda</i>	May 13	Lilac just opening
Gray Fox	<i>Stenonema fuscum</i>	May 15	Dames rocket first opening; dogwood blooming
March Brown	<i>Stenonema vicarium</i>	May 18	Dames rocket just opening
Green Drake	<i>Ephemera guttulata</i>	May 25	Locust tree in full bloom
Light Cahill	<i>Stenacron interpunctatum</i>	May 25	Locust tree in full bloom
Blue-Winged Olive Dun	<i>Drunella cornuta</i>	May 25	Tulip poplar blooming
Brown Drake	<i>Ephemera simulans</i>	May 25	Peonies open
Slate Drake	<i>Isonychia bicolor</i>	June 1	Oxeye daisy first opening; Mountain laurel opening
Blue-Winged Olive Dun	<i>Drunella lata</i>	June 15	Elderberry just opening
Yellow Drake	<i>Ephemera varia</i>	June 20	Chicory first opening and elderberry in bloom
Trico	<i>Tricorythodes species</i>	July 15	Spotted knapweed first open
White Fly	<i>Ephoron leukon</i>	August 15	New England Aster first open



# Early Season SMALLMOUTHS

by Darl Black



Lake Erie

At first everything seemed a little cloudy, like looking through dirty glasses on a foggy morning. However, I felt the warm April sun on my face and heard the gentle slapping of waves against the hull of the boat. A spinning rod rigged with a soft-plastic grub was in my hand. I cast the line out, counted the lure down, and began a slow retrieve.

About halfway through the retrieve, a sharp crack was transmitted through the line and rod. I swept the rod upward in a hook-setting arch. Although I was applying pressure to the fish, nothing happened. Then the fish began moving in the opposite direction, against a squealing drag. It was heavier than any bass I had ever hooked. When the fish slowed, I pumped the rod to regain line. Then the fish took off again. This time it picked up speed and started climbing. It broke the surface and somersaulted skyward.

This was indeed the gargantuan smallmouth of all time. It easily weighed 15 pounds. Suddenly a second boat appeared out of the mist with Billy Westmoreland, Tony Bean, Jerry McKinnis and several other smallmouth experts cheering me on. Fireworks exploded in the background. A biplane flew overhead trailing a banner reading "New World Record on the Line." Meanwhile the huge, huge smallmouth—still in the air—continued to dart and dodge around clouds trying to tie me up. I kept dipping and lifting the rod to maneuver the fish around the fuzzy white cover. Then the bass dived for the water. My boat partner held out the net. The new world record bass was almost mine.

"Wake up!" A voice disrupted my dream. "We're almost there," prodded fishing buddy Dave Hornstein.

I rubbed my eyes and looked out the window. We had just passed the Mill Creek Mall exit of Interstate 79. On the next rise we got a look at the offshore waters of Lake Erie. It was one big iceberg.

"Hope your information about the bay being ice-free was correct," muttered Dave.

It had been an exceptionally late spring. The likelihood of extremely cold water temperatures didn't bother us. The water could be ice-cold, as long as the ice cover was gone. I was confident we would catch a few smallmouth bass. After all, we had been doing this for more than a decade.

Fishermen mark the arrival of spring by different signs. For some it's the opening day of trout season; for others, it's the sucker run. For me, it's the first smallmouth bass I catch in Presque Isle Bay. Sometimes this occurs the last week in March, but more often than not it happens the first week in April. Some years when winter refuses to give up, it may not be until the second week in April.



## Proper perspective

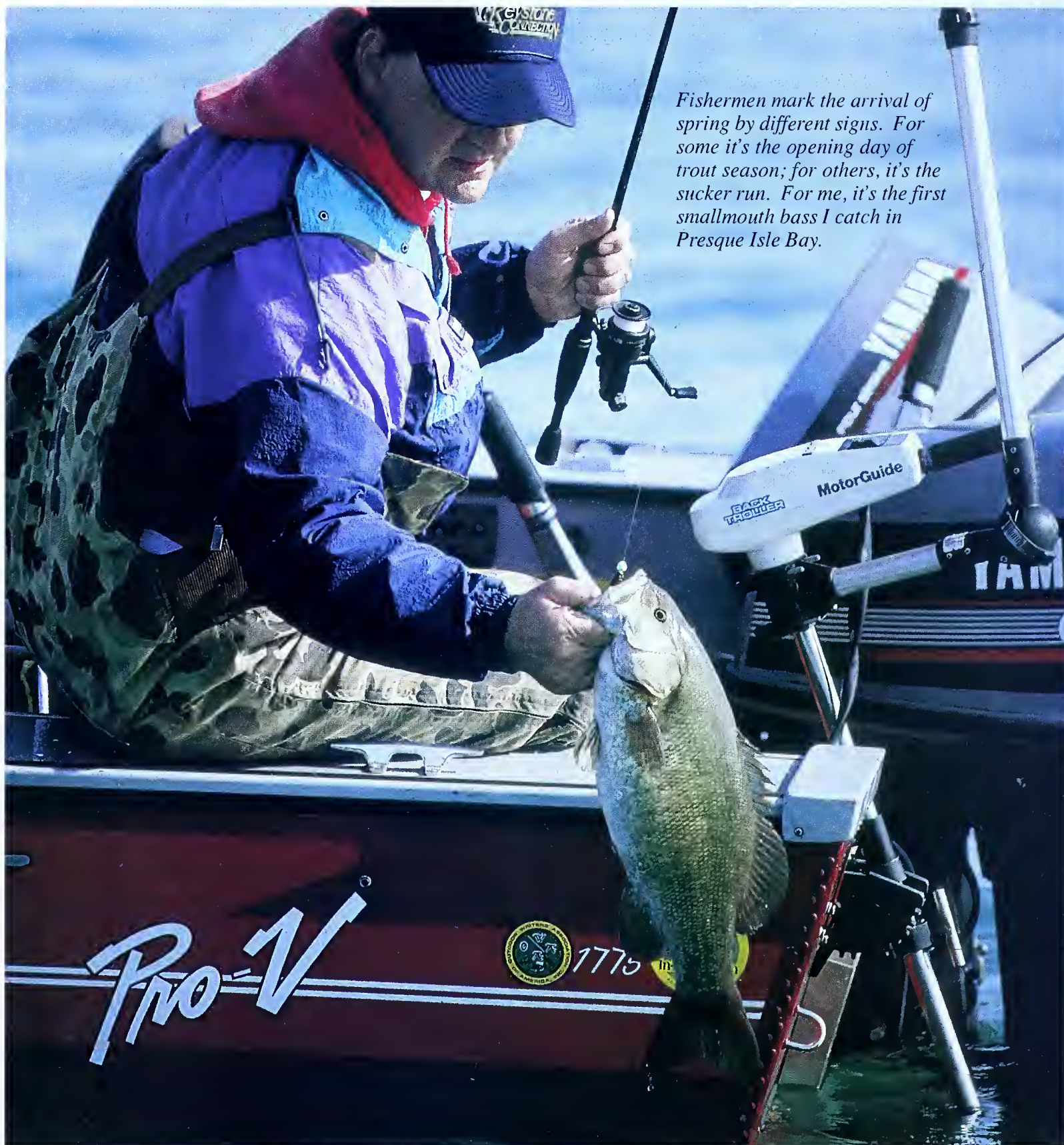
My first experience with Lake Erie ice-out smallmouth took place in the early 1980s when the Commission changed regulations to permit year-round fishing for bass on the state's rivers and larger lakes, including Lake Erie. By 1990, those regulations changed again. Today the bass season closes the Friday before the opening day of trout season and reopens the middle of June. However, the time from ice-out until trout season arrives can provide some of the finest bass fishing opportunities of the entire year.

# Early Season SMALLMOUTHS

What anglers have learned about Lake Erie smallmouth in this coldwater period can be applied to other waters in the

state. However, no other lake, reservoir, or river has the number of exceptional-size smallies that Lake Erie claims.

From a regulatory standpoint, the 3,500-acre Presque Isle Bay is regarded as part of Lake Erie. It's common sense, because bay and main lake waters are joined by a wide channel, permitting lake species to move into the bay during certain times of the year. So it is with the smallmouth bass.



*Fishermen mark the arrival of spring by different signs. For some it's the opening day of trout season; for others, it's the sucker run. For me, it's the first smallmouth bass I catch in Presque Isle Bay.*





*Blade baits (top two lures) and soft-plastic grubs (bottom two lures) are essentials for catching early season smallmouths.*

There are no studies to scientifically estimate what portion of the smallmouth population in Presque Isle Bay during the spring is actually Lake Erie residents during the summer. However, smallmouth anglers familiar with the Presque Isle fishery guess that fewer than five percent of springtime smallies in Presque Isle remain in the bay all year.

Smallmouths move into Presque Isle Bay about the time ice begins to break up. The warmer water of the bay attracts baitfish schools, including alewife, gizzard shad and emerald shiners. The bait in turn attracts smallmouths. The bay provides excellent spawning habitat, so bass remain through June. By the first of July, the massive schools of emerald shiners vacate the bay because the water is too warm. The remaining smallmouths leave with the shiners.

There are two ideas that should be made perfectly clear regarding the early season smallmouths. First, bass caught during March and April are not spawning bass. The bay water temperature rarely makes it to the low 50s before the season closes. The earliest smallmouth spawning in the bay does not occur until at least mid-May. The peak spawn is usually between the third week in May and the second week in June.

Second, for the vast majority of bass anglers who enjoy this early season, this is strictly a catch-and-release situation. There is absolutely no evidence that catching and immediately releasing smallmouth bass in water temperatures below 55 degrees has any negative effect on bass populations. For many anglers with small boats, this will be the best, and perhaps the only, opportunity to sample the Lake Erie smallmouth fishery. Fishing within the shelter of Presque Isle Bay is far safer than gambling with a finicky main lake.

### **When, where**

Ice cover disappears from Presque Isle Bay earlier and faster than the main lake. In part this is because shallower waters are easily warmed by the sun, as well as warmer water from creeks and discharges on the city side of the bay flowing into the bay.

If you really work at it, an angler may be able to connect with a smallmouth the day ice cover disappears. By the time the surface temperature reaches 42 degrees, anticipate more smallmouths in the bay. And by 47 degrees, the early season bite is in full swing.

Even though the numbers of smallmouths in the bay continue to increase into early May, the best chance to connect with a true trophy fish is April. Smallmouths in the six- to seven-pound range are reported in the early season. Smallmouths of this size are unheard of in the bay when the bass season reopens in June.

In Presque Isle Bay, early April smallmouths may be taken as deep as 25 feet or as shallow as seven or eight feet. The key areas at this time are major breaklines that drop from the sand/gravel flats into the bay basin. These breaklines typically run from eight or nine feet on top to about 20 feet on the bottom. The break along the dredged shipping channel is considerably deeper. However, this accounts for only a small portion of the bay. Isolated humps occasionally hold transient smallmouths after ice-out, but mid-bay structures are not consistent producers at this time.

*When the bass want only metal, feed 'em blade baits in sizes from 1/4-ounce to 3/4-ounce.*





# Early Season SMALLMOUTHS

Shoreline fishing opportunities for smallmouth in April are limited. Some fish may be taken from the North and South piers, and perhaps from the East and West piers. In all other areas, the bass are too deep to be caught by shore-bound anglers.

A boat equipped with a depthfinder is required. The depthfinder must be capable of marking schools of baitfish on the deeper flats and along the breakline.

When bait and bass are found, anchoring may pay off—at least for a short while. However, bass schools appear to be moving constantly, following baitfish. The bass may be in 20 to 25 feet of water for a short period, then in 10 to 12 feet as they trail the baitfish. Using an electric motor to move shallower and deeper on structure, as well as parallel to the breakline, results in more fish caught. Angler mobility is the key.

## Being prepared

The angler with a forte in jig fishing will excel at catching early season smallmouths. A few anglers claim success by trolling minnow plugs, but day in and day out, more smallmouths are taken on jigs and jigging lures than anything else.

A medium-light-power spinning rod with eight-pound-test line and a handful of 1/8-ounce to 3/8-ounce leadhead jigs with soft-plastic grub bodies will do the trick most days. Also, have a medium or medium-heavy outfit, either spinning or casting, with 12- or 14-pound test rigged with a blade bait.

Soft-plastic jig bodies should be three to five inches long, and designed to imitate baitfish. These bodies must fit the “subtle action” category because the best retrieves are extremely slow. Tube bodies are ranked at the very top. Other options include fantail bodies (Super-Dos); boot-tail grubs (Lunker City’s Finesse Grub or Brewer’s Bass Slider Grub); wide, thin floppy tails (Twister’s Curly-Tail or Kalin’s Lunker Grub); and small, soft stickbaits fished on leadheads (Lunker City’s Fin-S-Fish or Finesse Speciality’s KnobTail Shiner).

I’ll go out on a limb to mention some traditional coldwater smallmouth jigs that have not produced among my circle of fishing buddies during this early season on Presque Isle. These include the fly-and-rind (hair jig with pork rind), jig-and-pig (rubber-legged jig with pork frog), and soft-plastic crayfish. Sure, an occasional smallie may be taken on these jigs. But the jigs on this “failure list” are primarily fished as crayfish imitators. Presque Isle smallmouths are targeting baitfish.

Think alewife, gizzard shad, emerald shiners, spottail shiners and even small sunfish. This information will direct you to the best early season hues. White, pearl, silver, green, blue and smoke are the basic colors. Chartreuse does not seem to fit the baitfish color scheme. However, chartreuse excels only on dreary, overcast days. Usually two or more of these shades are laminated together, or injected with flashy sparkle. Now the productive colors take on names like Firecracker, Salt & Pepper, Sand, Rainbow Trout, Funky Fish, Rusty Melon, Electric Blue Shad and Golden Shiner—to name a few.

Dave Hornstein always has a Silver Flash (clear/silver flake) tube tied on one rod. It is his single most productive bait. Last spring he caught 52 smallmouths on a single silver-flake tube before the bass finally ripped the last remnants of the plastic from the jighead.

The retrieve should vary from day to day. A very slow, steady swimming retrieve within a couple of feet of the bottom is a

good starting point. If that does not work, experiment with hopping or dragging the jig on the bottom. Or give “deadsticking”

a try: That is, let the jig lay motionless on the bottom for 10 to 60 seconds before hopping or twitching it. Other days, an erratic popping retrieve several feet off the bottom attracts bass. Some of these retrieves are intended to imitate an injured baitfish.

However, a blade bait provides the best rendition of struggling forage fish. A blade bait is a weighted metal blade roughly shaped like a teardrop with one or two treble hooks. The lure vibrates when pulled through the water. The blade bait category includes the Sonar, Lucky, Silver Buddy, Bullet, Gay Blade, Cicada and Ripple Tail.

Blades in 3/8-ounce to 3/4-ounce sizes are typically used for smallmouths. They should be fished with a stiffer rod and heavier line than used for jigs. There are two basic options for working the lure. One is to cast the blade, let it sink to the bottom, and swim it back to the boat with horizontal rod sweeps.

Vertical fishing, the second option, is used for precise presentation in water deeper than 15 feet. Vertical jigging keeps the lure near the bottom, straight below the angler as the boat drifts or is slowly moved with the electric motor. The rod tip is swept upward 12 to 24 inches, then slowly lowered to the start point as the blade sinks to the bottom. On the upsweep, the blade vibrates wildly to attract fish. As the lure falls, it triggers strikes.

Some days both jigs and blades take fish. Other days, only soft-plastic pays off. And there are days when the bass seem to hit only hard metal. Why it works this way remains a puzzle even to the most dedicated smallmouth angler. For this reason, it’s always a good idea to have each lure rigged on separate rods.

## Dreams do come true

If your heart’s desire is to catch that first five-pound smallmouth, or if you simply relish catching and releasing 50 smallies a day, then a trip to Presque Isle Bay in early April is in order. Will you hook a new Pennsylvania state record? It’s possible. The current 7-pound, 10-ounce record was taken from Lake Erie, and a number of bass over 7 pounds have been reported in recent years. How about a new world’s record of at least 12 pounds? Probably not—but nothing is written in stone. That’s what dreams are all about. And Lake Erie smallmouths in Presque Isle Bay can make dreams come true.

ANGLER

## Main-Lake Smallmouths?

During the final weeks of bass season in early spring, smallmouths in Lake Erie proper are fairly inactive. The water in the main lake is considerably cooler than Presque Isle Bay. Many years there are large ice sheets still floating in the lake during the second week in April.

However, when steelhead trollers begin working the nearshore areas, they occasionally report incidental catches of big smallmouths on trolled plugs. A few degrees can make all the difference in the early spring. Once the nearshore areas of the main lake hit 47 degrees, the bass begin gobbling down baitfish. But the water temperature rarely climbs into the high 40s until after bass season closes in mid-April.—DB.



# Anglers Currents

## Tournament Regulations Introduced

At its quarterly meeting in Harrisburg January 22-23, the Commission proposed rulemaking that would update regulations governing fishing tournaments.

The proposed regulations are divided into two closely related and overlapping sections. One section relates to use of Commission property and the other to general tournament requirements. Key provisions of the proposed rulemaking include examination of the potential effect of an event on fish populations as well as the potential effects on fishing and boating opportunities for non-tournament anglers.

The proposed regulations also encourage catch-measure-release tournaments where fish are not taken into possession, either on a stringer or in a livewell. The rulemaking also addresses certain conditions under which the culling of bass would be allowed.

The regulations define a fishing tournament as an organized and promoted event in which individuals fish during a specified time for awards and where the sponsors or organizers have their own rules for participation.

Currently, such fishing tournaments are subject to two permit requirements. Tournaments conducted using Fish and Boat Commission property require a permit for special use. Most tournament sponsors must apply for a special activities permit because these events often involve an unusual number of boats.

If the new regulations were adopted, additional factors that will be considered when processing a tournament application would include:

- Whether the proposed tournament will have adverse effects on the protection and management of fish at the site.
- Whether the proposed tournament will impede or reduce fishing and boating opportunities for those not involved in the tournament.
- Whether the proposed tournament conflicts with another tournament at the same place and time.
- Whether the tournament is proposed for the opening weekend of the season for any game fish.
- Whether the proposed tournament may result in a congestion of vehicles.



- Whether the sponsors of the proposed tournament have demonstrated their ability to conduct a tournament in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Commission and the conditions of the permit.

The regulations detail the Commission's discretionary power to impose certain limitations on a tournament, such as limitations on the number of boats and participants, the time and duration of the event, requirements for the proper disposal of fish, requirements for filing catch reports within 10 days after the event, and limitations on taking fish. When appropriate, the Commission could mandate that the tournament be conducted as a catch-measure-release ("Golden Rule") tournament. For tournaments on Commission property, the proposed regulation would let the Commission require off-site parking.

Sponsors of an event could also request permission to cull uninjured smallmouth and largemouth bass from a recirculated or aerated livewell.

The Commission is currently seeking public comment on the proposed rulemaking. A hearing on the tournament regulations will be held later this spring.

In other business:

- A proposed 1.2-mile extension to the Selective Harvest program on Codorus Creek, York County, was approved. The addition to a current 3.3-mile stretch regulated under the Selective Harvest Program provides a 4.5-mile stretch designated for trophy wild trout fishing.

- Final rulemaking identifying the display requirements for the Lake Erie Fishing Permit was approved. The permits, which are required for all anglers fishing in Lake Erie, Presque Isle Bay and tributary streams, fund a compensation program for gill net operators, as mandated by the Pennsylvania General Assembly. The Commission, which has been assigned to administer the program, has mandated that the permits be permanently affixed to the general fishing license and displayed on an outer garment.

The Commission also adopted a proposed compensation schedule for payment to the gill net license holders.

- Proposed rulemaking clarifying the prohibition on possessing fish in posted pollution zones was passed. The rule prevents the possession of fish while in the act of fishing a designated pollution zone.

- Proposed rulemaking clarifying regulations on the use of long bows, spears and gigs was adopted. The rulemaking clarifies the wording of rules governing the equipment's use on the Delaware River by providing that: Only herring (except shad) and catfish may be taken with a long bow with arrow or spears and it is unlawful to use such equipment within 275 yards of an eel weir.

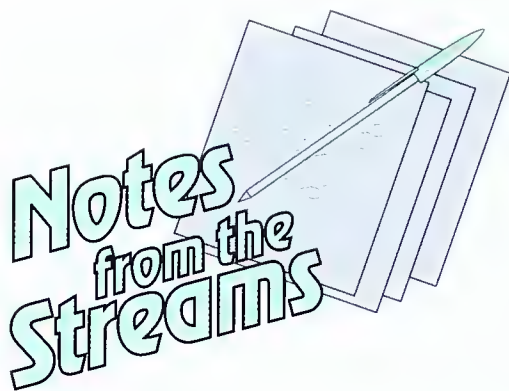
- Clarifications of regulations on boundary water trap nets and commercial fishing operations were adopted as proposed rulemaking. The rulemaking identifies the legal configuration and use of trap nets.

- The Commission also accepted property donations of .3 acres of land along Red Bank Creek in Jefferson County and two acres adjacent to Neshannock Creek, Lawrence County. The Commission also moved to cancel a lease for .74 acres near the Clarks Ferry Bridge, Dauphin County, and to transfer to PennDOT property rights for a section of land along Fishing Creek in Clinton County. In exchange, PennDOT will improve access to a Commission parking lot on the property.

- The Commission also moved to grant the Executive Director authorization to devote Key '93 bond money for the repair of agency-owned dams. The Executive Director was also given the authority to seek advertising for Commission publications.

- The Commission voted to postpone development of a headquarters building.—*Dan Tredinnick.*





### What an appetite!

Nearly 25 years ago, I wrote an item in "Notes from the Streams" about bullfrogs eating ducklings at a fee-fishing area in Delaware County. The operator of the area was concerned about the mysterious loss of the young mallards until he discovered a large frog with little webbed feet sticking out of its mouth.

I recently heard another tale regarding this amphibian's gourmet tastes, reinforcing the notion that we are lucky bullfrogs don't get any larger.

Bob Nimond, of Mifflintown, was fishing in Lost Creek a few years ago when he noticed a big bullfrog nearby. Not one to pass up the opportunity for a frog legs dinner, Bob managed to capture the frog.

When he cleaned the frog, Bob found two garter snakes and a mole in the frog's stomach. Obviously these creatures are diners of opportunity and will attempt to devour just about anything they can fit into their mouths.—*Larry Baker, WCO, Juniata/Mifflin counties.*

### Beware of cold water

The winter of 1994 will be remembered for record low temperatures and months of snow and ice. This year meltdown is well under way or almost finished, but it will still take weeks of high air temperatures to raise the temperatures of most waterways. Keep in mind that cold water kills, and low water temperatures can be expected well into June. Don't become another victim of hypothermia—when you are out on the water, dress warmly and wear a personal flotation device (PFD). Even anglers who wade in frigid waters with hipboots or waders can succumb to the cold. So learn the signs of hypothermia and don't take unnecessary risks.

The Commission Bureau of Boating offers a pamphlet explaining the symptoms of hypothermia and how to survive if you suddenly fall in the water. To receive a copy, send a stamped, self-addressed business-size envelope to: Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Bureau of Boating, P.O. Box 67000,

Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000 and request "Survival in Cold Water."—*WCO Guy A. Bowersox, Snyder/Union counties.*

### Native or not?

It surprises me how many anglers are unaware that smallmouth bass are not native to Pennsylvania. Before the 1860s, they were found only as far north as the Potomac River and its drainage. Many of the initial Pennsylvania smallmouth bass were transported by steam locomotive and stocked from trestles in rivers throughout the Commonwealth.

Pennsylvania's fish population was very different before the arrival of the white man. The muskellunge, now thriving throughout the state, was found only in the Allegheny River drainage. American shad traveled up most major streams in the East that drained into the Delaware and Susquehanna rivers. Striped bass were also found far up many of these streams.

There were no carp or brown trout—these fish are European natives. The rainbow trout comes from the West Coast. The brook trout and lake trout had Pennsylvania to themselves.

Where we now have such popular predators as muskies, smallmouth bass and northern pike, the channel catfish was probably near the top of the predator ladder. I wonder about the history of the largemouth bass, because lakes and ponds were at a premium at that time.

Angler attitudes toward the sport differed, too. Residents along the upper Delaware River objected to the proposed stocking of smallmouth bass because they feared it would adversely affect the fall-fish population.

What will our fish populations and attitudes be 100 years from now?—*Larry Baker, WCO, Juniata/Mifflin counties.*

### Earth Day every day

April 22 was Earth Day, but that doesn't mean the celebration can't last all year. When you are out on Commonwealth waterways, take a few moments to appreciate the bounties Mother Earth has placed in our trust to enjoy and preserve for future generations. Take a moment to walk along your favorite shoreline and pick up some of the litter. Why not set a goal to haul out a bag of litter, or even a truck-load? You'll feel much better for the effort, and you will have helped to preserve the future of your favorite outdoor sport.—*WCO Guy A. Bowersox, Snyder/Union counties.*

### Locking horns with the river

In spite of sirens and flashing yellow warning lights, Billy failed to leave the area below Holtwood Dam on the Susquehanna River. Rising water stranded him on a rock surrounded by the turbulent water. When four kayakers approached him, Billy plunged into the swirling water and was swept away by the current.

The kayakers caught up to him and provided the encouragement he needed to make it to shore. Kicking wildly and barely keeping his head above water, Billy made it safely to shore. With all four feet planted on solid ground, the billy goat shook the water from his coat, looked over his shoulder at the river, and disappeared into the brush.—*WCO Lee Cryer, southern York County.*

### Big improvement

This spring I stocked the lower section of Kishacoquillas Creek near Lewistown. This is the first time this section of stream has ever been stocked. Talking to old-timers who remember what the stream was like 50 or 60 years ago, I am told its waters were oily and full of sewage—not a stream you would want to fish.

Now, after decades of cleanup, installation of treatment plants and general knowledge of proper disposal of waste and trash, this stream is available for good fishing. In fact, the stream has improved so much that a section below the Standard Steel plant has been deemed Class A Wild Trout water.—*Larry Baker, WCO, Juniata/Mifflin counties.*

### Teach them to fish

Everyone has a friend, relative or neighbor who hasn't learned the pleasures of relaxing behind a fishing rod. Why not pack a picnic lunch and treat your favorite non-angler to an outing of dunking worms or floating flies for panfish during the upcoming Fish-for-Free Day in June. Ponds and lakes should produce a lot of panfish action in the late afternoon and early evening hours. Remember, bug spray, cold beverages, lawn chairs, suntan lotion, shade and good conversation will keep your guest comfortable and interested. And don't forget to take plenty of photographs. Taking the time to teach a non-angler to fish can help ensure a future of fishing and good friendships.—*Guy Bowersox, WCO, Snyder/Union counties.*



## Welcome to the family

We've all heard stories of the same box turtle turning up in the same backyard or driveway year after year. A family in Honey Grove, Juniata County, has one of these annual visitors which, after many years of appearing in the backyard each summer, has begun to make itself at home.

This particular box turtle has acquired a taste for dog food and makes daily visits to the family dog's food dish on the back porch. The turtle is rather tame and comes on the porch to have its meal even with people around.

After a few weeks of fattening up on this exceptional diet, the turtle departs, going about its business, hopefully to return the following year.—*Larry Baker, WCO, Juniata/Mifflin counties.*

## Dream girl

Every sportsman has a fantasy regarding his sport, whether it be the stringer of 10-pound largemouths or the rack with a 26-inch spread. Sometimes these fantasies involve the perfect spouse.

I'm not talking about Christie Brinkley or Elle MacPherson. A true outdoorsman would never allow his mind to wander far from fishing or hunting. These fantasies are for the "wannabe" sportsmen, not those of us who read the *Angler*.

A good friend, Terry Yocum, appears to have found his fantasy come true in his devoted wife, Lori. Last year, Terry broke his ankle while walleye fishing. Forced to get around on crutches, Terry and Lori went hunting on a friend's property. Terry hunted from a stand on the edge of the property and was lucky enough to down a nice buck. Lori, the devoted spouse we all dream of, gutted the deer, dragged it to the truck and loaded it (along with Terry), and drove home. She also skinned and butchered the deer—Terry never got a drop of blood on his hands.

Lori fillets all Terry's fish, and he catches quite a few. She's even been known to clean a buddy's catch now and then. Between making life a lot easier for Terry and managing their two young sons, she finds time to tie all his flies.

Dream on, you guys.—*Larry Baker, WCO, Juniata/Mifflin counties.*

## Case of the lost license

I recently received this note from a youth I had stopped for fishing without a license. To protect the innocent, the names have been omitted.

"To whom it may concern: I was fishing on Lake Sheridan last summer when a Fish

and Boat Commission WCO stopped me for fishing without a license. He told me to find my license and send it in as proof that I had purchased a license. I have been unable to locate my fishing license, but I've enclosed my original number and have since purchased a replacement.—An innocent angler.

Written below this letter was: "P.S. Don't tell my son, but his original license was in his pants pocket and I washed it.—His mother."—*WCO Robert Fasching, Lackawanna County.*

## Osprey making a comeback

While patrolling East Licking Creek on opening day of trout season, I witnessed many fishermen waiting for 8:00 a.m. to arrive so they could begin fishing. I also saw one fisherman who had begun fishing, but I couldn't tell if he had caught anything yet.

An osprey was cruising along the same stream with its eye on a nice trout breakfast. But like everyone else, he hadn't caught anything by the arrival of the opening hour.

It's great to see these magnificent birds slowly making a comeback in Pennsylvania. It's not too unusual to see them anymore. We even get a glimpse of a bald eagle from time to time in my district.—*Larry Baker, WCO, Juniata, Mifflin counties.*

## Stakeout

An alleged freshly killed doe was reported found near Fish & Boat Commission Deputy Gary Walter's house. Deputy Walter left word of the discovery on Game Commission WCO Bernie Schmadler's answering machine. Deputy Walter requested assistance at the scene to help maintain surveillance in hopes that the poacher(s) would return to pick up the kill. In the spirit of interagency dedication and cooperation, Deputy Walter braved freezing temperatures to lie in a fencerow near the kill for several hours through the night. When no help arrived, he returned home, only to be greeted by the mysterious grins of his wife and daughter. They told him WCO Schmadler had phoned hours ago to say that the dead doe had been lying in the field for nearly a week.—*Guy Bowersox, WCO, Snyder/Union counties.*

## Great program

The Game Commission's stream fencing program has benefited several streams, some of which are in my district. Where once there were bare banks and degraded stream beds from countless cattle hooves, the streams now flow between banks

overgrown with brush and shrubs, and the shaded and undisturbed streambeds can again be used by bottom-dwellers such as insects and small fish.

I'm impressed at how the streams have improved, and the cattle still have easy access to water at selected sections. I hope that more streams will receive this protection as time goes on.—*Larry Baker, WCO, Juniata/Mifflin counties.*

## Unusual fishing area

While working the Commission's display at the Eastern Outdoor Show in Harrisburg, I met a fisherman with a tale about how quality fishing can be found in the most unlikely places.

This gentleman is an avid fisherman who fishes anywhere he might catch a trout or two. He happened to see a small stream similar to a drainage ditch behind a mall parking lot. This stream flowed in an area where it is assumed you cannot find trout, or any fish, for that matter.

Our hero, withstanding the stares and whispers of shoppers returning to their cars, climbed down the bank with his gear to give the stream a try. Passersby probably thought he was a lunatic about to learn you don't fish in such an unlikely place if you want to catch anything.

He returned shortly with five trout all over 15 inches long. Unfortunately, his initial audience was not there to witness his success.

This stream is probably a small tributary to a major stocked stream and has a nice population of trout from the larger stream. His success shows it doesn't always pay to fish only in stocked streams. There are many tributaries to these streams that can afford good fishing to those who can take a few guffaws and smirks from the unknowing.—*Larry Baker, WCO, Juniata/Mifflin counties.*

## Please wear your PFD

Nearly every WCO can recall investigating a fatal boating accident. We grimace at thoughts of recovering the body, and share the pain felt by families when we must notify them of the death of their loved one. We love the pleasure boating on Pennsylvania waterways gives to the public, and we despise the unexpected cruelty those same waters bring when tragedy strikes. It's been proven time and again that personal flotation devices (PFDs) save lives. When you see us on the water, we'll be wearing our PFDs—please, do us a favor and wear yours, too.—*Guy Bowersox, WCO, Snyder/Union counties.*



## Reminder for Erie Anglers

The Fish and Boat Commission reminds Erie anglers of the following:

- A valid Trout/Salmon Stamp is required to fish for salmonid species, including steelhead. The 1995 stamp, which features a pair of Lake Erie steelhead, must be signed, affixed to the license and clearly displayed on an outer garment.

- The Pennsylvania Legislature enacted a law that bans the use of gill nets on Lake Erie. Under this law, the Fish and Boat Commission must administer a program that provides transitional compensation to the holders of commercial gill net permits. To fund the program, a Lake Erie Sport Fishing Permit, in the form of a sticker to be applied to the fishing license, is required for all an-

glers fishing in the Pennsylvania portion of the lake, Presque Isle Bay or tributary streams, beginning January 1, 1995. Permits cost \$3 plus a 50-cent agent handling fee. The program will be discontinued when enough money has been raised to fund the gill net compensation program. The expected length of the program is three to five years.

Permits are available at all licensing agents in the Erie area. Commission waterways conservation officers can also issue the permits (Erie County only.)

- Fish and Boat Commission property adjacent to Elk Creek is open to foot traffic only. No vehicle access is currently permitted on the property itself.—*Dan Tredinnick.*



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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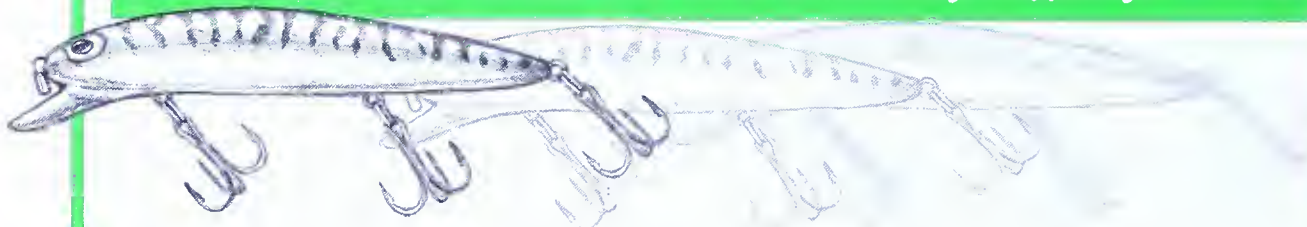
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## Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Bryan*



Early spring rains can raise the level of a lake, creating new fishing spots overnight. As the water floods grassy areas, fish move into these new feeding places, gorging on the food items washed into the lake by the rain and on the baitfish seeking cover. Surface lures like spinnerbaits and floating-minnow lures are good choices in this situation because these shallow areas are often very weedy. The same idea applies to flooded river banks.

Spring rains also improve fishing for catfish. Immediately following a drenching rain, fish lakes and ponds near rivers and streams dumping water into a reservoir. Catfish gather at the mouths of these tributaries, feeding on the food carried by the rising water.

Crappies move into shallow water to feed during the warm days of the early spring months. On cold, windy days, look for them to move out to deeper water.

Look for big smallmouth bass near the main currents of rivers and streams, and in the deeper, rockier water. Big bucktail streamers and Woolly Buggers are effective flies, especially when the water is a little high and off-color.

Many trout fishermen wade into a river and start throwing casts toward the middle of the stream and that elusive far bank. However, they most likely are standing in some of the best holding water in the river. Carefully work the shoreline, casting beside rocks, logs and other structure before fishing the mid-stream lies.

When fishing lakes and ponds for trout, it is important to use a longer leader and a more delicate tippet because of the quiet, still water. Trout often cruise the shallows of these waterways, so watch carefully for a pattern, attempting to cast your fly in front of the trout.

When you release a trout after a long, hard fight, make sure to hold the fish facing into the current so that water can wash into and through its gills. Support the fish until it is strong enough to swim from your hands on its own.

Many times trout demand a very small fly before they will strike, yet the gape of very small hooks can often make getting a good hookset difficult. Try tying the same size fly on a slightly larger hook, using only part of the hook shank. This gives you the same small silhouette with the improved hook-setting ability a larger hook offers.

Do not make the mistake of judging the size of a trout by the size of the rise ring. Large trout and other fish often sip flies from the surface, barely causing a ripple. The only true way to judge the size of a trout is to catch and measure it, so make every cast to every rise count.

Eddies are great places to find trout, so fish these areas thoroughly. The swirling currents of an eddy trap food, making these easily recognized spots prime holding areas for feeding fish. Concentrate especially on the backside of the eddy, where trout like to lie in wait to ambush food as it swings past.

*illustration- Ted Walke*



# SMART

## Angler's Notebook

by Carl Richardson

### Seasons of a Trout

Natural reproduction occurs in many streams, including those stocked with hatchery fish. On most of these waters stream productivity, habitat and water quality limit reproduction and growth. Few wild fish reach adulthood in these waters, so

they are stocked with hatchery fish. There are a few streams where conditions are suitable for reproduction and growth. These waters are not stocked with hatchery trout.

#### SPRING

Developing eggs, still in redd, hatch anytime from February to March. Hatch date depends on stream temperature.

Fry, still living in bottom gravel, live off yolk sac. When this sac is used up, the fry emerge from the gravel. This usually happens in April through early May.

Fry eat plankton, the microscopic animals in the stream. Fry are 1 1/2 inches long when they emerge.



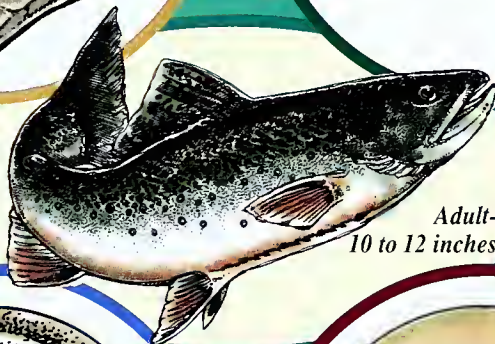
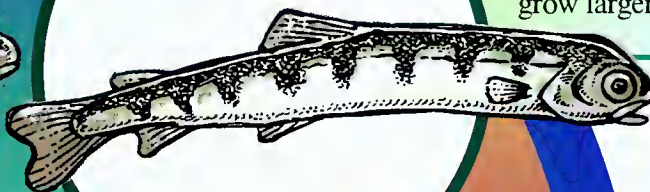
After Hatching

#### SUMMER

To hide from predators, young trout spend time in shallow water hiding under and around rocks. They eat small insects and plankton. Depending on the stream, young trout may be three to four inches long by the end of the summer. In the wild, fewer than 10 percent of these fry survive the first year.

Three-year-old fish are getting ready to spawn for the first time. The eggs develop in the female and grow larger each day.

Fry with Parr Marks-  
3 to 4 inches



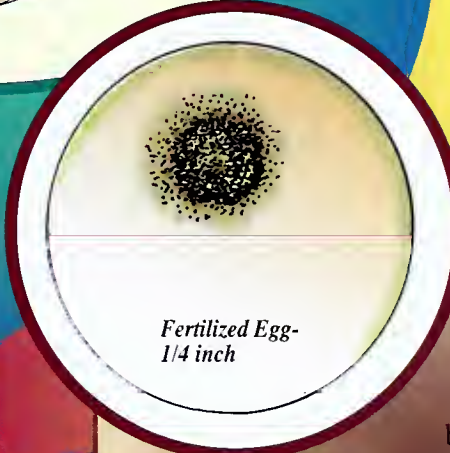
Adult-  
10 to 12 inches

#### WINTER

Fertilized eggs develop. Oxygen comes from the steady flow of water. Nutrition for the eggs comes from the egg yolk. Temperatures must stay within the 35-degree to 55-degree range for brook and brown trout eggs to hatch. Rainbow trout eggs don't survive when temperatures drop below 40 degrees.



Fertilized Egg-  
Eyed Stage



Fertilized Egg-  
1/4 inch

#### FALL

Females select a spot for the nest, called a redd. Gravel bottoms with a steady flow are ideal. Using her tail she clears a spot for the eggs. A three-year-old fish, about 10 to 12 inches long, will release 500 to 1000 eggs. Fertilized eggs, about 1/4-inch round, sink into the spaces between the gravel.

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# Pennsylvania ANGLER



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# Straight Talk

## It's Necessary and the Right Time!

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission is seeking a much needed fishing license increase starting in 1996. The Commission operates on two special funds--a Fish Fund and a Boat Fund. These funds come from the sale of fishing licenses and from boat registration fees. We receive no general tax fund revenue from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Currently, the Boat Fund is healthy because of a 1991 boat registration fee increase, but the Fish Fund is in financial trouble. The law does not allow us to use money from the Boat Fund to help us with our Fish Fund deficiencies.

The Fish Fund is in trouble primarily because of 12 years of inflationary erosion of our Fish Fund license revenues. The last resident fishing license increase was in 1983 when fees went from \$9.00 to \$12.00, a 33 percent increase. How was the Commission able to survive this 12-year period without an increase in resident fishing license fees? The reason was prudent management, increased federal funds, a trout/salmon stamp that started in 1991, and a drawdown in our Fish Fund reserve.

We have estimated that, based on current revenue and expenditure patterns, the balance in the Fish Fund will begin to bottom out in November of 1996. This means that we will be in a negative cash flow situation--unable to pay our bills. To avoid this we have taken some serious cost-cutting measures. I've placed a hiring freeze with a cap of 432 filled positions out of an authorized complement of 446 positions. I've also reduced overtime by 15 percent across the board in all bureaus. We are also reducing the number of our wage positions (seasonal employees) by

50 percent and making drastic reductions in our operating and fixed assets expenditures. We are deferring purchases of land, new vehicles and equipment.

We are asking for an increase to \$16.25 for the resident fishing license for the 1996 license year to combat inflation, to maintain fishing programs at current levels of service, and to meet anglers' desires for improved fisheries programs. These include more land and water acquisitions, extended aquatic resource education and angler information programs, improved facilities and programs for the disabled, and increased law enforcement to protect, conserve and enhance the aquatic resources of Pennsylvania.

The following shows the current fees and the proposed 1996 fees:

<i>License Category</i>	<i>Current Fees</i>	<i>Proposed Fees</i>
Resident	\$12.00	\$16.25
Non-Resident (Annual)	\$25.00	\$32.25
Tourist	\$20.00 (5 days)	\$25.25 (7 days)
Senior Resident (Annual)	\$ 2.00	\$ 5.25
Senior Lifetime	\$10.00	\$15.25
Trout/Salmon Stamp	\$ 5.00	\$ 5.00

It is also proposed for the issuing agent fee to increase from 50 cents to 75 cents.

The proposed fishing license fees increase would generate \$2.5 million in fiscal year 1995-96 and \$3.1 million in fiscal year 1996-97. We also propose that an automatic increase of \$2.00 would go into effect in fiscal year 1999.

To start the ball rolling on our proposed fishing license increase, we have met with the senior leaders of the Game and Fisheries Committees of both the Senate and House of Representatives. We have also met with Governor Ridge's administration to explain our Fish Fund situation and to gain its support.



**Peter A. Colangelo**

*Executive Director*

*Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*

For the Commission to obtain approval for this much needed fishing license fee

increase, we need your continued support. We received written endorsements for a fishing license increase from the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, the Unified Sportsmen and Trout Unlimited, but that session expired without the General Assembly taking action. We

are counting on continued support from these groups and other sportsmen's groups as well as individual anglers. Members of the General Assembly and the administration need to know where you stand.

If the \$16.25 resident fishing license is enacted, our fees will still be less than fees in other states with comparable fisheries programs. The Sport Fishing Institute has recognized the Fish and Boat Commission for having the top fisheries program in the nation. The Commission needs a fishing license increase to meet the challenges of maintaining and improving these outstanding fishing and related programs.

*Peter A. Colangelo*



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**The cover**

*This issue's cover, two Lake Erie steelhead, is the 1995 trout/salmon stamp artwork, painted by Wisconsin artist Terry Doughty. Trout/salmon stamps and prints are available by ordering from Wilderness Editions at (800) 355-7645.*

**Opening Day**

What an exciting time of year this is! I can't wait to get out on the water! In addition to the valuable information you'll find in this issue, here are more ideas on how to make Opening Day and the beginning of the trout season memorable.

- Plan what you want to keep and release before you fish. Don't creel more fish than you know you'll need.
  - When it comes to private land, remember that good manners is an investment in your future access.
  - If you're fishing bait, keep it on the bottom. You have to risk snags and hangups to tempt the biggest trout.
  - Study the water before you cast. Work bends in streams, and place your bait so that it drifts under or alongside debris, fallen trees, undercut banks and rocks.
  - Be patient. Sometimes a trout takes on the second, third or fourth drift.
  - Spool fresh, 4-pound- to 6-pound-test line on your reel, and sharpen every hook you use.
  - Practice tying knots with your old fishing line. A week or two of practice, only a few minutes each day, can help you greatly improve your knot-tying.
  - Enjoy. Breathe in the fresh air; listen to the birds and gurgling water; observe the new plant growth of the season; go with good company--a friend, spouse, children or grandchildren; and whether or not you catch fish, treasure Pennsylvania's waterway bounty and your ability to appreciate it.
- Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.





# *Fly Fishing the Middle Allegheny*

by Mike Bleech



*Reading the Allegheny River  
is like reading the water in  
smaller trout waters when  
the river flow is low enough  
for wading. Most trout are  
in the swifter water  
around the islands.*

Flowing cool and rich with oxygen from the gates of Kinzua Dam, for the next several miles the Allegheny River provides some of the best fly fishing for trout in the East.

Before loggers stripped the surrounding Allegheny Highlands of trees, when giant white pines filled the valleys, perhaps brook trout inhabited the river, but smallmouth bass and other species were probably far more abundant. The forest has grown back, though not the same as it had been when the slash-and-burn farming techniques of those inhabitants shaped the land. And sometime during the past century both brown trout and rainbow trout were introduced to the watershed. When I was a lad, during the 1950s, local anglers knew that the river in the Kinzua area was the place to go for big trout, along with Kinzua Creek, which flowed into the Allegheny at the village of Kinzua.

Even before construction of Kinzua Dam was complete, the tailwaters became the big trout hotspot that it remains today. And soon after the reservoir was filled in 1966, the good trout fishing began to spread downriver.

Though several people were doing it, I never heard about anyone fly fishing the tailwaters before Dr. Charles Myers and I did it on February 10, 1974, according to my fishing log. That very cold winter I invented my first, and only, fly of any consequence—the Tailwaters Special, a large streamer that imitates the emerald shiner. We had a riot catching several trout and losing or rolling many others.

Fly fishing in the middle Allegheny has gotten a lot more involved since then, leaving me in the dust. For an update on fly fishing this magnificent piece of water, I spoke with a few local anglers who fish it frequently.

Bill Jeffers moved to the area soon after the dam was put into use. Much of the time he worked with anglers at a marina and a tackle shop, becoming one of the best known outdoorsmen in this part of the state. He is an enthusiastic fly fisherman, but not a traditionalist. An acute observer of nature, he is a quick innovator when he sees a need.

"I go out and do a lot of scouting without ever touching the water," Jeffers says. "I do almost as much scouting as I do fishing."

Scouting for trout is one of his favorite recreational activities. He takes along a folding chair and a thermos of coffee, and watches the river from a high spot where he gets a good view of the water.

One of the things Jeffers is looking for is when trout are feeding. Feeding patterns can be quite reliable for several days at a stretch,





*Even before the construction of Kinzua dam was finished, the tailwaters became the big trout hotspot, as it is today. Soon after the reservoir was filled in 1966, the good trout fishing began to spread downriver.*

usually relating to the life cycles of insects. He determines that he will return at the same time the next day, if he doesn't fish right then. He always keeps his fly fishing gear in the car.

Another thing he looks for is the type of water trout prefer. From mid-May through mid-June, the time when he thinks fly fishing in the river is best, trout are generally in the bases of riffles.

"The best is right where the riffle enters the pool," Jeffers says, "but they might be spread anywhere through the riffle."

Later in the summer, July and August, he finds trout more in the tails of the pools, just above the heads of the riffles.

Jeffers fishes the Allegheny from Kinzua Dam down to Betts Park, in Warren. The average size of the trout he catches is 14 to 16 inches, but he says he has lost many larger trout. He likes very small tippets. One of his secrets, make that former secrets, is using invisible thread that he buys at a sewing store. He gets a lot of action, but larger trout are hard to handle. His presentation tactic adds to the problem.

"I had a rod almost pulled out of my arms, and that's why I started fishing that way," Bill recalls.

His unorthodox presentation is allowing the line to straighten at the end of the drift, swinging the fly as the current takes the belly out of the line. He twitches the line during the seemingly unnatural swing.

"I've had more fish hit it then than any other time," he says.

Bill's favorite fly is also contrary to traditional thinking.

"I used to run a lot of dries—Cahills, Hendricksons, Caddises. I thought they were taking things off the top. But now I've gone just under the surface with emergers—soft hackles mostly, grays, tans and greens."

Most often he uses size 14, but he also carries sizes 12 and 16. Some are weighted with four wraps of fine lead in the shank. These are for use in the riffles.

"I wish I'd started fishing that soft hackle sooner," he says.

Dan Stimmell got a lot of local anglers started in fly fishing. He initiated fly tying classes while he was a grade school principal. Now retired, he is recognized as one of the best fly fishermen on the river.

"We've had some real good days on the surface, but we've caught more an inch under the surface or in the film," he says.

There are numerous good hatches on the river. But while it appears that trout are rising to the surface, most often they are actually taking insects before they reach the surface. Anglers who do not catch on will not hook many trout.

"People fish themselves silly and never get a hit," he says.

Like Jeffers, Stimmell fishes flies in that part of the water column. His favorite flies are the Picket Pin, Brown Hackle and caddis imitations in sizes 10 to 14, mostly 12 and 14. Sometimes caddis flies should be as small as size 18.

Like most fly fishermen, Stimmell eagerly uses dry flies when the opportunity arises.

"One of the best dry flies we have used, and it had nothing to do with what was going on, is the March Brown," he says.

Stimmell uses an 8 1/2-foot, 6-weight fly rod.

Like each of the middle Allegheny fly fishing regulars, Stimmell warns visiting anglers that trout fishing in the river has been inconsistent for two primary reasons. One is because catchable size trout are no longer stocked from the Allegheny National Fish Hatchery, a federal hatchery that is situated at the base of Kinzua Dam.

The other cause of inconsistent fly fishing is that anglers are at the mercy of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps regulates the outflow from the dam for flood control, and to augment downriver flow for various reasons such as industrial water use and to keep pollution diluted. Outflow from the dam commonly varies from 600 cubic feet per second (c.f.s.) to 20,000 c.f.s.

*There are numerous good hatches on the river. But while it appears that trout are rising to the surface, most often they are actually taking insects before they reach the surface. Anglers who do not catch on will not hook many trout.*



# Fly Fishing the Middle Allegheny

"Before you leave home get the dam outflow report. Wading is not too bad from 1,200 c.f.s. down," Stimmell says.

Most local fly fishermen wade. That works fine because they have their favorite fishing spots. Many visiting anglers float-fish, which is a good way to get to know the river.

Bob Hourigan ducks any attempts to call him an expert at fly fishing the middle Allegheny. Yet, he has been at it since the early 1970s, and he has a lot of fun doing it.

"Every riffle in that river holds trout," Hourigan says. "I'm not going to live long enough to fish it all."

He has fly fished the Allegheny from Dixon Island, which marks the downriver end of the tailwaters special-regulations area, down to the riffle below Wildwood. That is a 23-mile stretch. The portion from the dam to Warren, at the mouth of Conewango Creek, is generally regarded as the best trout water in the middle Allegheny. But a fingerling trout stocking program by the Fish and Boat Commission has spread good fly fishing farther downriver.

On finding trout, Hourigan says, "I just fish the riffles. You can spot the pockets. You know where the fish will be."

Reading the Allegheny River is about like reading the water in smaller trout waters when the river flow is low enough for wading. Most trout are in the swifter water around the islands. Within the long riffles there are small pockets and pools. Look for the deeper runs, current edges or where a rock breaks the current. In the longer, deeper pools between islands you are more apt to find walleyes, muskellunge and smallmouth bass.

"I use the Hare's Ear all year long," Hourigan says. "I do more nymph fishing than I do dry."

In addition to the Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear, his favorite flies include the Muskrat Nymph, Woolly Bugger and Stone Fly Nymph. Many of his nymphs are weighted, and he adds splitshot in deeper water.

"You take an Adams for a dry and you only need four or five flies for that river," he says.

Hourigan also suggests bringing a net. He has a story about the consequences of not having one. I will let him tell you that tale himself if you meet him along the river.

Ask most any local fly fisherman about the river and he will suggest that you talk with Rod Henry. He is regarded as one of the more knowledgeable and skillful river fly fishermen. He is also more traditional.

"When I'm fishing the river it's almost exclusively on top," Henry says.

But he is not a purist to the point of being stubborn. He'll get his leader wet if it is the only way to catch trout.

"I use quite a handful of traditional wet flies," he says.

Henry is likely to carry more flies, at least more varieties than the other fly fishermen I questioned. Among his favorites during caddis hatches are the Henryville Special with an olive body, sizes 12 to 18, and the Elkhorn Caddis in tan, brown, olive and dun. The Spent-Wing Adams is a favorite imitation of a spent caddis.

"I use the caddis pupa and caddis emerger when I can't take them on top," he noted.

Even though Henry has done most of his middle Allegheny fly fishing from late May through all of June during recent years, he also has fond memories of a caddis hatch that occurs around Labor Day. Matching that hatch required that he drop down to size 18 to 22 flies.

"I took some nice fish over 20 inches in that hatch," he says.

All four middle Allegheny fly fishermen agreed on a long 6-weight rod.

"I love a fast-action rod for the river," Henry says.

The fast-action rod gives him good distance casting and mending abilities.

He also offered a suggestion for handling big trout in heavy water.

"I use lots of backing, and I've been awfully glad I had it on a number of occasions."

He has caught trout 22 inches long on flies in the river, and has seen some considerably larger trout.

As a last thought for visiting fly fishermen, Henry says, "You might want to suggest that they have a plan B in their pockets."

Rod Henry's warning to visiting fly fishermen for a back-up plan is sound advice. Even though the middle Allegheny is a gorgeous place to fly fish, the trout tend to be quite large, and sometimes the fishing is fast, there are some minuses to go with these pluses.

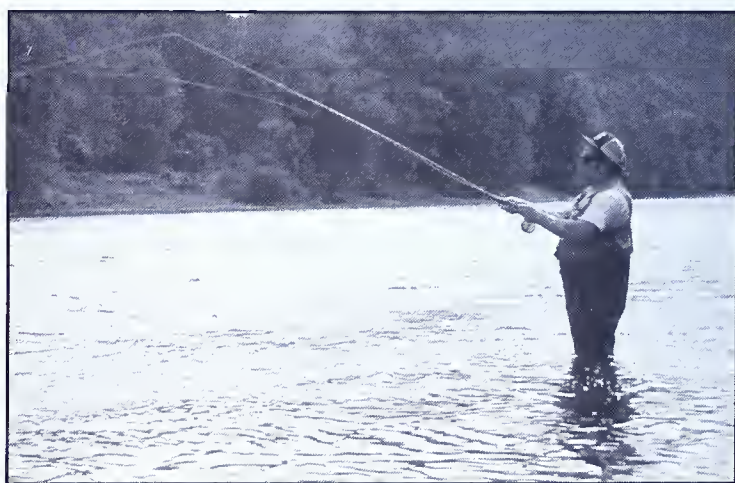
Any change in dam outflow is likely to disrupt fishing patterns. Most discouraging to wading fly fishermen is when the outflow increases above 1,200 c.f.s., which greatly restricts mobility.

Fortunately, there are numerous interesting "plan Bs" in the neighborhood. Within a half-hour drive of the middle Allegheny there are many excellent trout streams, including Tionesta, Kinzua and Brokenstraw creeks, plus numerous smaller tributaries.

ANGLER

## Float fishing lowdown

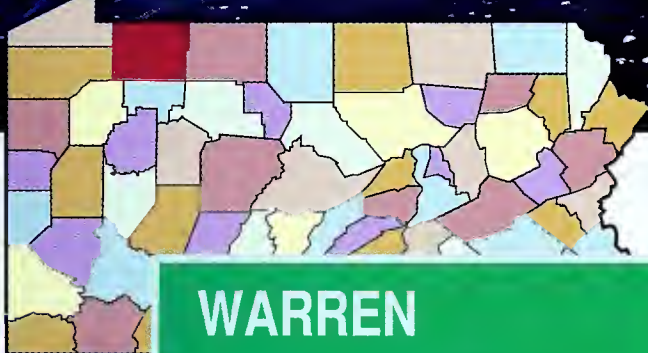
Small boats suitable for floating the river can be launched at the Big Bend Access Area, off Route 59 just below Kinzua Dam. Take-out points include "the point," where Conewango Creek flows into the river at Warren, and Betts Park, at the downriver end of Warren. The point is eight miles from the dam, Betts Park, nine miles. Canoes can be rented at Warren. For local information, contact Travel Northern Alleghenies, P.O. Box 804, Warren, PA 16365; phone 814-726-1222.—MB.







Area at Dixon Island



**WARREN**



photos-Mike Bleech; map graphics-Ted Walke



*Map area shows the outflow from the dam to Warren, at the mouth of Conewango Creek. This eight-mile stretch is the middle Allegheny's best trout water.*



A man wearing a red hat, a yellow jacket, and waders is fishing in a stream. He is holding a fishing rod and is standing in the water. The background is a dense forest with green foliage. A large circular graphic with concentric green and white rings is overlaid on the right side of the image. The text "THE WORM'S TURN" is written in red, stylized letters along the top edge of the circle.

# THE WORM'S TURN

by Glenn Sapis

For getting trout  
onto the working  
end of a fishing  
line when running  
waters are high,  
dark and cold,  
there is nothing  
like a worm.





Many fishermen “progress” from bait to hardware to flies in their “growth” as trout anglers. When it comes to early season stream fishing, however, progress is not necessarily more productive. For getting trout onto the working end of a fishing line when running waters are high, dark and cold, there is nothing like a worm.

When the trout season opens at 8 a.m. on April 15, the flowing streams, fed by snowmelt, are going to be chilled. Fish, cold-blooded creatures, will react to water temperatures in the 30s and 40s with lethargy. Trout will not be eager to chase a bait, and they will require less to eat than later in the season. When waters warm, a fish’s metabolism and fuel needs increase, and its menu may grow from nibbles to munchies.

In cold, fast water especially, trout take up stakes in calm water so that they don’t have to exert themselves, yet be close to the current that may sweep food from upstream right into their “dining spot.” When the spring melt and rains help to wash land-based morsels into streams, worms may be the special of the day.

Worms are a natural food, a substantial source of energy, and a relatively slow-moving prey. They can be the perfect bait to convince otherwise reluctant trout that maybe they are hungry after all.

### Which worm?

When you discuss worms for bait, you have to make sure everyone is discussing the same critter.

“We sell four kinds of worms to trout fishermen,” says Diane Loudon, one of the members of the family that runs Dave’s Sports Center, Doylestown, Bucks County.

“Of course, we sell drift, or garden, worms, and we sell nightcrawlers,” Diane says. “We also sell meal worms and wax worms.”

The meal worms and wax worms, indisputably effective baits for trout, are not really worms. Instead, they are grubs, larval stages in an insect’s metamorphosis.

Drift, or garden, worms, as she calls them, are the most popular kind of worm that spring trout anglers use. Other shops may refer to them as trout worms, angle worms, fish worms or garden hackle. Bait shops may also sell a similar commercially grown hybrid called the redworm or wiggler. You’ll recognize all of these 2- to 4-inch thin brownish-red spaghetti-like earthworms as being identical or similar to the worm you encounter at the end of a spade while gardening.

Nightcrawlers are considerably larger, growing up to 10 inches long.

“I advise my customers to cut the crawlers in half,” Diane says.

Tom Fegely, popular newspaper, magazine, television and radio communicator on the outdoors based in Coopersburg, Lehigh County, annually covers opening day for Allentown’s *Morning Call* newspaper. He concurs with Loudon’s advice.

“I’m always covering opening day, not fishing it,” says Tom,

**Worms are a natural food, a substantial source of energy, and a relatively slow-moving prey. They can be the perfect bait to convince otherwise reluctant trout that maybe they are hungry after all.**



“so I get to see what a variety of people are doing. One of the most common mistakes I observe is people using the whole nightcrawler.”

In a current and when casting, it is difficult to keep a nightcrawler intact, anyway. So what you’ve done is cast away and lost half of your bait. What’s left on the hook for the trout may be a poorly presented portion of the worm, and perhaps an exposed hook point. That exposed point contributes nothing to the argument your bait is making that it is a natural food, no strings attached, and it also increases the likelihood of your snagging underwater obstacles.

Most importantly, however, remember that in the cold water of spring, trout are looking for finger sandwiches, not a giant hoagy.

That brings us back to the garden hackle or wiggler.

Though worms are not commonly seen drifting in a stream, these terrestrials do get washed off banks often enough to be an occasional part of the natural stream fauna. Even if a trout, especially a hatchery-reared fish that has been nursed on commercial pellets, has never seen a worm before, it’s attracted to the bait. In fact, there are few fish species that don’t like a worm.

Perhaps it is the pink color in water that attracts predator fish. Perhaps it is the long, promising mouthful that is the allure. For fish that depend on their sense of smell to help locate their next meal, maybe it is the earthy scent worms possess. Any or all of these factors make worm and worm imitations popular baits for fish ranging in size from little pumpkinseeds to rod-bending striped bass. Trout, thank goodness, are no exception.

So once equipped with bait, a worm fisherman plying the running waters of early spring must know, first, which tackle to use, second, how to rig the bait and, third, how and where to fish the offering.

## Hooks

“We recommend bait-holder hooks,” says Loudon.

Bait-holder hooks not only have a barb near the point but



also have sharp protrusions on the shank. These barbs, of course, better secure the wiggling worm on the hook.

“Size 10 is what we suggest,” says Loudon.

In hook terminology, a hook gets smaller as its size number increases. Size 10 is a relatively little hook that can fit into even a small trout’s mouth, yet still do a good job of impaling the wiggling worm.

Some hooks are sold snelled on doubled, looped leaders. Others are sold loose. Loudon reports that they sell about an equal amount of snelled and unsnelled hooks.

You might have reservations about using snelled hooks. First, the line used is often heavy, sometimes stiff. Though spring waters are usually turbid and fast, a leader much thicker than

your line might be apparent to a fish. Second, because of its stiffness, if a leader becomes kinked, it may retain its unusual bend and create an unnatural drift of your bait in the water. Third, the loop created by the doubled line may, on a rare occasion, get snagged where a single line wouldn’t. Last, if you have a lot of confidence in your knot-tying ability, you may choose to tie your own connection from line to hook rather than depend on a pretied knot.

Of course, there are advantages to snelled hooks. The main one is that it provides you with a leader that is likely stronger than the line on your reel. This can come in handy during the rare occasion of fighting a really big fish and more frequently, unfortunately, when battling stubborn rocks, roots and other hook-grabbing obstacles.

## Line

Next up from your hook and perhaps your leader is your line. Though dark early season waters may mask line diameter, thick, heavy lines could work to your disadvantage. For instance, thicker lines are more difficult to cast far and accurately than are thin-diameter lines. Working your worm along the bottom is going to lead to inevitable snags, and even if you are wearing waders, breakoffs. After you’ve broken off several yards of the



*Find deep, dark, sheltered, calmer waters that afford easy access to food drifting by, and you will have found spots likely to hold trout.*



thicker line, you'll note the spool of your line is down considerably, making accurate casting even more difficult. In comparison, if you lose 20 yards of a fine-diameter lighter line, the loss would hardly make a dent on your spool.

At the other extreme is trying to tempt trout with wispy 4- and even 2-pound-test in the rapid waters of spring. You're asking for trouble. First, the many snags that have been washed into the torrent will win most of the tugs of war you wage with them. Before you know it, you will have lost considerable line, impeding your casting accuracy.

Furthermore, fighting a fish, even a relatively small fish, is more difficult when you are also battling the strong currents that rage in early spring. Breakoffs can easily happen. The problem is further compounded if you hook a hefty fish. The trout of your dreams may always remain strictly in your dreams if you rely on line that is too light.

A good compromise would be 6- to 8-pound-test monofilament. The 8-pound-test offers you casting accuracy, large line capacity and enough strength for virtually any fishing situation you encounter. Furthermore, in the darker waters of early season, the line will be nearly invisible.

A secret to getting your worm where the fish are is being able to keep your worm near the bottom of the stream, yet still allow it to drift naturally. The solution to this problem is placing the right amount of sinkers on your line about 8 to 12 inches above your hook.

## Splitshot

Though one can prescribe the type of worm, size of hook, and strength and diameter of line, advising on splitshot is more a trial-and-error proposition.

Splitshot varies in size. It makes sense to think small, but add or subtract individual weights until you get the proper drift. Using easily removed splitshot is wise, especially if you find yourself fishing in a variety of slow-water and fast-water conditions as you work your way along the stream.

Fegely says that one of the most common mistakes he views each opening day is bait fishermen having too much weight on their lines. They cast out, and their baits just settle on the bottom, he says.

When your bait rests in one spot on the bottom, while other streamborne items are rushing by, the artificiality of your offering becomes obvious. Furthermore, instead of covering the several yards that one drift would allow, you have covered a mere square foot. Another problem with being overweight (your line, not you) is that while your bait rests on the bottom, your line above it drifts with the current, sometimes snagging vegetation that has been flooded by spring's high water levels. On the other hand, with too little weight, your worm drifts very quickly and rises to the surface. The trout will likely be at greater depths.

The spin or spin-casting outfit you use could vary from ultralight to medium action. Remember, however, that the angler who tries to maximize his sport by equipping himself with the flimsiest tackle may, like Don Quixote, fight losing battles with immovable objects. A trophy trout aided by the strong currents could prove too much of a match for featherweight gear.

Proper equipment is the part of the worm-fishing strategy you can execute at home. Rigging and fishing your bait is done on the job.

## Rigging a worm

Describing how to put a worm on a hook could sound more

like instructions in sewing than in fishing. Some might say that you "darn" the hook through the worm at the tip above its "collar," bring the point out below the collar, and let the worm rest on the bend of the hook. Others may "thread" the point of the hook into the worm at the tip above the collar, then slide the worm along the shank of the hook until it reaches the top. The remainder of the worm is left to squirm invitingly. Other experienced bait fishermen find a way to impale two worms on the same hook. Their theory is that more is better.

My fishing experience suggests that the collar, which more scientifically is called the ganglia, the worm's sex and nerve center, is the most desired portion. Therefore, you'll want to have your hook's point in nibbling distance of the collar.

If worm fishing can be placed on an academic level, then it could be said that there are two schools of thought on whether the point of the hook should be exposed. Those who favor allowing the point to show feel such a rig enhances "hookability." Personally, I prefer to pierce the worm with the hook just above the collar and slide the worm along the hook, keeping the point in the worm. The natural appearance more than compensates for the slight loss of hooking power this rig may sacrifice.

## Finding trout

Finding the fish is the next test for the well-equipped, well-rigged worm fisherman.

This is where knowledge of trout habits pays off. Remember that the trout are conserving their energy by avoiding the strongest currents. But that's not all they are avoiding. They also are avoiding predators, be they feathered, furry, or hairy (like you). Therefore, they are seeking shelter. Without eye-lids, they are also avoiding the sun.

So find deep, dark, sheltered, calmer waters that afford easy access to food drifting by, and you will have found spots likely to hold trout.

Places that qualify are deep-cut banks, overhanging root systems, fallen trees and branches, and large rocks in midstream that break the current and allow for easy ambush immediately downstream. Artificial and natural dams create deep pools below them. Study the stream where you find such conditions. Watch the way the water flows. Observe the course of a leaf or other floating object.

Look for these kinds of trout-holding situations while you work upstream. A disturbance of the bottom silt made by your wading will be relayed downstream, leaving trout upstream unaware of your presence. Remembering that your worm is a natural bait, you want to present your offering in a manner that seems natural to the fish. Therefore, try to position yourself so that the cast is made slightly upstream and across-stream. Then, by following the drifting worm with your rod tip, you can help direct the worm along a natural flow similar to the flow of the leaf you may have observed.

By allowing the worm to drift downstream, you'll be keeping your line fairly taut, and it's that taut line that creates a sensitive connection between you and your worm. It signals you if your worm becomes snagged—or nibbled. Experience teaches you the difference in feel. A snag usually stops the bait. A nibble slows it down with an exciting rap-tap pulsation.

If you are not sure of the difference, set the hook, just in case. In the high, roily waters of April and May, you'll get into your share of snags no matter what your method or bait, but if you also want to get into your share of trout, give the worm a turn!





# On the Water

with Charles F. Waterman

We have read how to walk in deep, swift water and how to use wading staffs without catching them between our legs (the collapsible ones don't often give way at the wrong time any more). We have studied cleats and felt soles, and anglers tip-toe and dance downstream in heavy current.

I have a shiny little fly reel that I couldn't really afford but the delicate click is a little uneven and there is an unsightly groove on the slightly bent spool where it struck a rock when the water was four inches deep. My knee is no longer swollen but I am even more careful these days. Years of bruising stumbles have taught me that it is easier to swim with waders full of water than to land gracefully on slick rocks. I once crawled on hands and knees for quite a distance when I found modest-sized rocks in five inches of water were as slick as greased bowling balls.

The undramatic dangers of rocky trout and smallmouth streams are not confined to doddering ancients or prancing juveniles. I knew an all-American quarterback who permanently damaged his back in a mountain stream where the water barely covered the rocks, and although I can snicker a little when somebody ships cold water in expensive waders, I begin to think of first aid procedures when I see someone crash down where there is only a modest splash.

My old friend Tex Denson, who thought mountain rainbows got better the higher they lived, threw a very good rod and reel, a vest and some boxes of flies off a cliff some time back. Tex, who had survived a bruising fall, reasoned that such operations were foolish for a man with a family. Tex bought a new outfit the following spring, but he did use special care after that.

It was I who experimented with the metal shavings that could be attached to the sole of a wading shoe, and I crossed a big river with the grace of a nautical gazelle. While over there I caught three nice trout, too. It was only when I started back that I found the non-skid preparation had worn off, so I swam back with very little dignity. Several days later I recalled I'd had a camera in the back of my vest. It was not a waterproof camera. The man at the repair shop said it would have been worse if it had been saltwater but that it was ruined anyway.

Because we are basically land creatures, it is natural to assume that very shallow water is less dangerous than very deep water. Even a foot of cold depth can provide a welcome cushion when groping feet fail to find a solid spot. Cut the depth to four or five inches and things can become serious very fast. We have produced aluminum cleats, soft iron knobs, super felt and combinations but no two streams have exactly the same vegetation for rock coating (generally, algae lumped off as "moss").

There was a bitter result for the friend of mine who had carefully chosen his footwear but stepped into a grass-covered muskrat



hole on the bank and broke loose his Achilles tendon. That called for crutches.

With time, it is possible I have gained some wading judgment (probably classified as cowardice by more youthful casters). Last year I followed a rocky creek through an open canyon, the signs of other fishermen becoming scarcer as I went upstream. The trout were willing and by the time I had reached a really narrow part, the walls of the canyon had closed in until my creek was only a roaring, squirting little watercourse with small pools among rough-cut boulders.

There was brush crowding the slanting water and the rocks were not only slick but sharp-edged. At the water's edge the walls went almost straight up and each cast was a planned flick back into a small gap and then a cautious throw into one of the surprisingly deep pockets. The fish were more than a foot long for some reason and each catch was a sort of balancing act. I don't know where the really little rainbows were.

Flick the size 14 dry caddis into one of the short, foamy runs and watch for the inevitable flash beneath it, a flash considerably broader than usually seen in such spots. Then try to keep his head up.

I fell twice, once when I banged the little reel and once when my elbow hit a sharp-edged boulder. There was a lot more such water ahead, but I climbed out and left it.

I am getting smarter.

ANGLER



# Rusty's Beadhead Worm

by Chauncy K. Lively  
photos by the author

Whenever worms are mentioned we generally think of earthworms or nightcrawlers—the kinds of wriggling creatures we sought as youngsters—with a hoe on the edge of the garden or with a flashlight on the lawn after a summer night's rain. They were—and still are—the favorite bait of any kid who has shouldered a cane pole and hiked or biked to the local pond for bluegills. But there are many other kinds of worms, which find habitat in both streams and stillwaters and are eaten by virtually all fish. Many are relatively small—one-half inch or shorter, and most are ringed, or annulated, with narrow segments.

It is well-known that high water following heavy rains carries with it a drift of food more substantial than normal. Much of it consists of organisms washed out of burrows along the bank or from disturbed muck or detritus on the stream bottom. The diversity of wormlike creatures in streams is very broad, ranging from aquatic earthworms and other waterborne worms to uncased sedge larvae—the so-called “naked caddis nymphs.” Is it any wonder that fish become satiated after such a high-water feast?

The recent upsurge in the use of metallic beads in fly tying has spurred the appearance of many new beadhead fly patterns. I don't know who originated the beadhead style, but it has been adapted to many subaquatic patterns—and quite successfully, I must say.

I always enjoy browsing through the fly bins in a well-stocked fly shop. I always feel like a youngster in a toy store, I suppose, but the variety of patterns I find is fascinating and it often inspires a fly tying binge when I get home. One such is the shop at Oates Au Sable Lodge in Michigan. It is owned and operated by Rusty Oates, a fierce conservationist and one of Michigan's finest fly tiers. His Beadhead Worm caught



my eye and it struck me how closely it resembled many little wormlike thingies we find in trout water, on which the fish regularly dine.

I suppose it could be argued that the pattern's metallic bead is an unnatural appendage. However, from a practical standpoint the flashy bead seems to attract rather than repel, and its slight additional weight ensures the fly's quick entry through the surface film. The pattern uses a 1/8-inch gold bead, listed by dealers as the “Orvis Caddis Bead.” This bead has a dished-out hole on one side and a plain hole on the other. I like to thread the bead onto the hook so that the dished-out side faces the bend to provide maximum access to the eye. If the bead is reversed, the eye is recessed into the dished-out hole, making it more difficult to attach the leader. With some hooks you may have to squeeze down the barb to mount the bead.

The curve of the pattern's body depends on the curve of the hook's bend. My favorite hook for this fly is the Tiemco 2487 (2X wide, 2X short) but other short-

shank, wide-gap hooks will do.

The body coloration is determined by the color of the working thread, which serves as the fly's underbody. The body itself is a single strand of clear Body Glass, wound in close, but not overlapping, turns over the underbody. Body Glass is a flexible, compressible plastic marketed in a narrow, continuous strand. Because of its oval profile it provides a realistic body seg-

mentation resembling natural worms. And because the body coloration is underneath the transparent covering, it produces an illusion of outstanding translucency. Narrow Swannundaze has the same characteristics as Body Glass and may be substituted for the latter.

My favorite colors are olive, brown, red, black and tan—but not necessarily in that order. Actually, I've never detected that trout show a strong preference for one color over another. Perhaps it's because nature provides subaquatic organisms in a wide variety of colors.

Fish Rusty's Beadhead Worm as you would a nymph, casting it quartering upstream and allowing it to drift naturally, and mending line as required. When it reaches the end of its free drift, it will swing around below you as it rises toward the surface on a taut line. This may be a critical time. Often a trout will take the fly as an emerger on its ascent. If the current is fairly strong, don't be in a hurry to lift and recast. Sometimes a trout will follow the fly on the swing and need a few seconds to make up its mind after it stops.

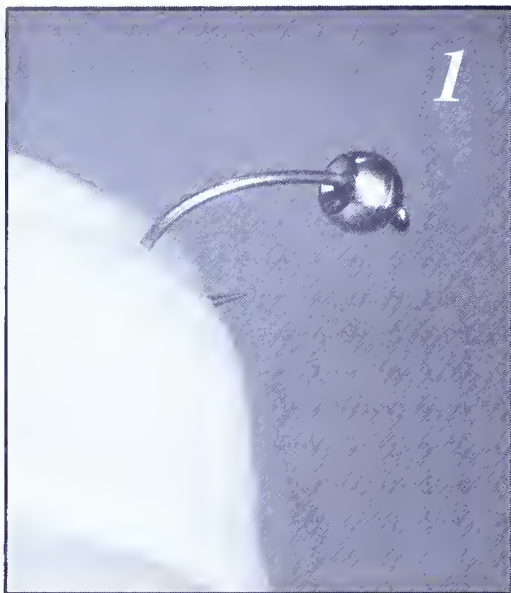
For anyone who has steered away from trying to tie flies because of perceived difficulty, this is a good pattern to tie as a starter. Even those who think they have two left hands will find it a breeze, and once they begin to catch trout on their own handiwork, they'll wonder why they delayed so long.



ANGLER

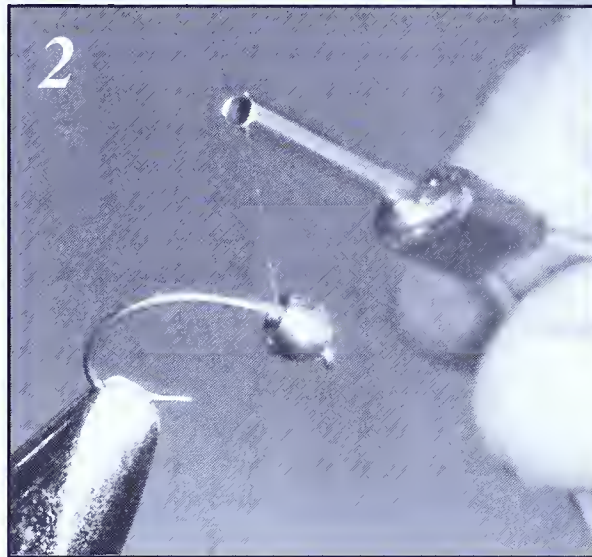


# Rusty's Beadhead Worm

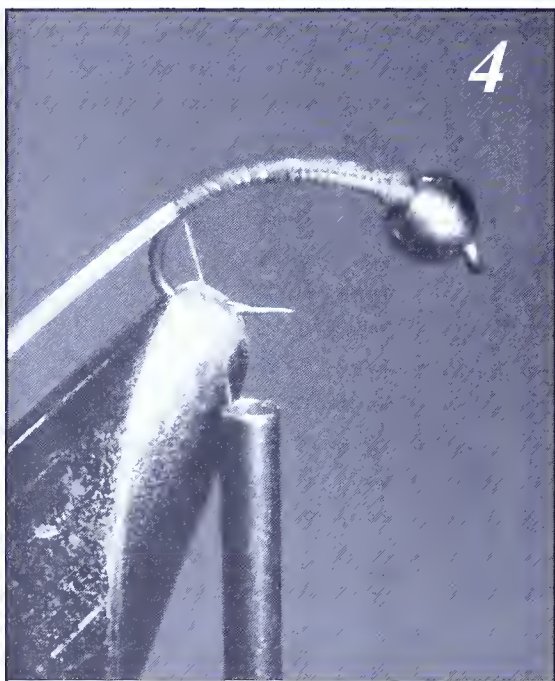


**1** Mount the bead over the hook point and slide it around the bend to the eye, with the bead's dished-out side toward the bend.

**2** Tie in the thread behind the bead and trim the excess. Wind two or three additional layers of thread over the tie-in.



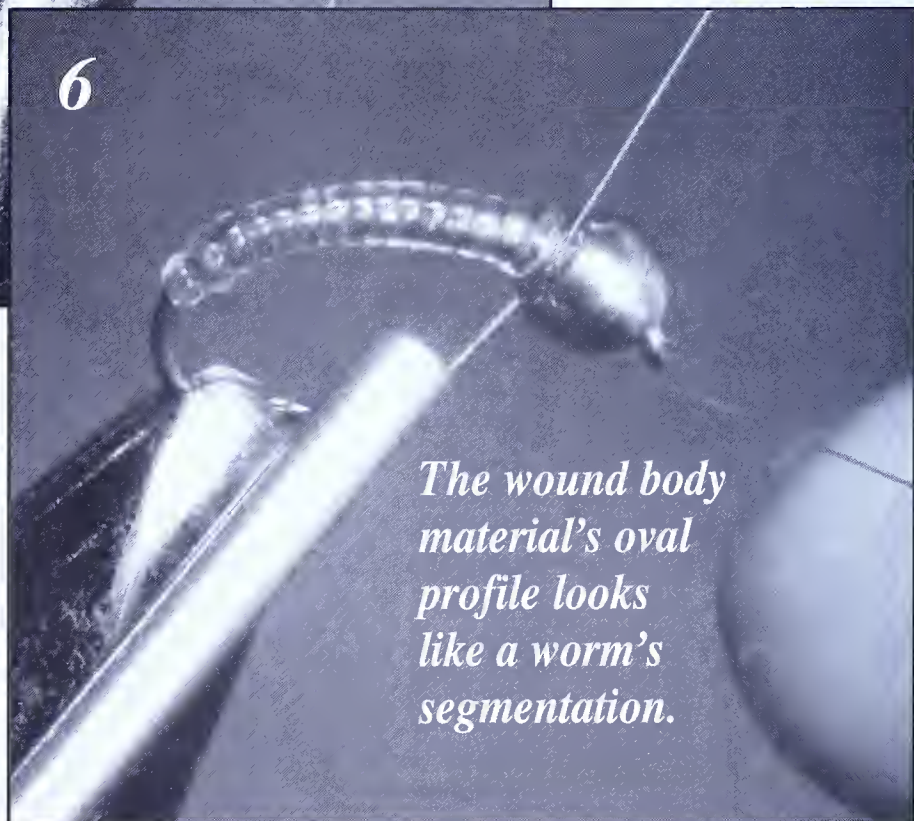
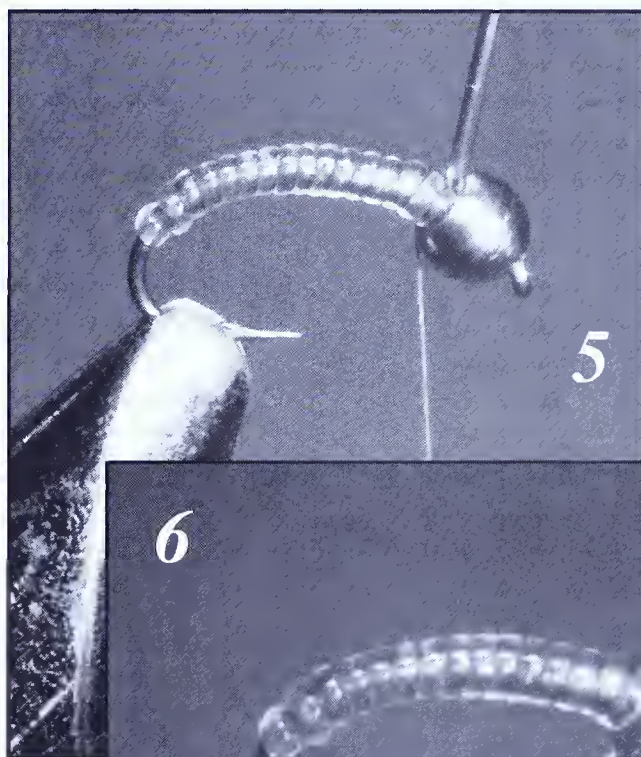
**3** With your fingernails, press layers of thread into the bead until the bead feels solidly in place. You may need to brace the eye with a solid object as you press.



**4** Lay the Body Glass lengthwise on top of the shank and tie in behind the bead. Wrap over to a point well beyond the bend. Then wrap in close turns back to the original tie-in.

**5** Wind the Body Glass in close turns to the bead and tie off. Trim the excess.

**6** Whip-finish the thread behind the bead and cut the thread. Apply head lacquer to finish the windings.



## Rusty's Beadhead Worm

**Hook:** Size 12 Tiemco TMC 2487 (2X wide, 2X short) or equivalent.

**Head:** 1/8-inch gold bead.

**Thread:** Your choice of olive, brown, red, black or tan 6/0 prewaxed.

**Body:** Clear Body Glass or fine Swannundaze.

*The wound body material's oval profile looks like a worm's segmentation.*



# CONNEAUT CREEK: Waterway for All Seasons

*by Robert L. Petri*

photo-Robert L. Petri



Conneaut Creek is a true four seasons fishery. As the seasons change, Conneaut Creek offers an ever-changing variety of angling, from stocked trout in the spring to smallmouth bass in the summer to steelhead and muskies in the fall and winter.

Only a very small section of Pennsylvania sends its waters north to the broad expanses of Lake Erie. The entire Pennsylvania portion of the Lake Erie watershed drains only about 550 square miles of Commonwealth real estate. By comparison, by the time the fledgling Allegheny River leaves Pennsylvania on its loop into neighboring New York, it already has accumulated a watershed greater than 600 square miles.

Even though the Lake Erie watershed is small compared to other Pennsylvania drainage basins, small does not mean inconsequential. Featuring a geological backdrop that is unique in Pennsylvania, the Lake Erie tribs careen down steep canyons of layered shale on their way to the big lake. Where they flow away from the fringes of the metropolitan Erie area and glide through the pastoral farmlands and woodlots of Erie County, they are among the most handsome Pennsylvania streams.



**Drifting a live softshell  
crayfish through the pockets  
and pools is a very  
productive way to take  
Conneaut Creek bass.  
Nightcrawlers and  
hellgrammites are also  
productive baits.**



The effects of the great glaciers that formed the Great Lakes and their watersheds left Pennsylvania's Erie shoreline with a series of streams that are short in length, with fisheries that are decidedly seasonal. These waterways are at their best in the autumn and spring when hordes of steelhead bent on spawning make their annual migrations. It is then that streams like Elk Creek, Walnut Creek and others fill with huge trout and draw anglers from across the Commonwealth. As spring blossoms into full summer, most of the Lake Erie tribs shrink into tiny rivulets flowing over beds of crumbling shale, waiting once again for the rains of autumn and the return of the big fish.

One Lake Erie trib, however, breaks the mold. Near Pennsylvania's western border with Ohio, the boundaries of the Lake Erie watershed take a sudden southward plunge to include a good portion of the swampy lowlands of western Crawford County. Here is the valley of Conneaut Creek, the largest, and from a fisheries standpoint, the most diverse of the Lake Erie tributaries that call Pennsylvania home for at least a portion of their lengths.

Conneaut Creek is a true four seasons fishery. As the seasons change, Conneaut Creek offers an ever-changing variety of angling, from stocked trout in the spring to smallmouth bass in the summer to steelhead and muskies in the fall and winter.

Unlike Pennsylvania's other Lake Erie tribs, there are no slack periods on Conneaut Creek. Let's take a closer look at the stream and the angling opportunities it offers.

Conneaut Creek rises just a short

distance east of the town of Linesville in west-central Crawford County. The very narrow upper reaches of the stream travel through a patchwork of wetlands and small woodlots, and they don't interest the visiting angler. However, they do provide significant habitat for deer, ducks and other wildlife.

The Conneaut Creek fishery story begins at the tiny Crawford County village of Dicksonburg, off PA Route 18 about seven miles north of Conneaut Lake. At this point Conneaut Creek becomes approved trout water, and stocking begins. From Dicksonburg downstream approximately nine miles to the village of Springboro, Conneaut Creek receives several thousand brown and brook trout before each opening day of trout season. A single inseason stocking in early May helps sustain the fishery.





Good trout water in this flat portion of Pennsylvania adjacent to the Ohio line is the exception rather than the rule. Commission Area 1 Fisheries Manager (AFM) Craig Billingsley describes the stocked portion of Conneaut Creek as a "good trout stream for the area."

### Dicksonburg to Springboro

In the Dicksonburg to Springboro section, Conneaut Creek is a low-gradient waterway characterized by gentle riffles and short, deep pools. There is an abundance of undercut clay banks and overhanging willows that provide cover for trout. In the aftermath of a summer downpour, holdover browns in excess of 20 inches are occasionally winched from under these banks.

Access to the stocked section of Conneaut Creek is very good. Between Dicksonburg and Springboro, close to a dozen township and legislative routes intersect the stream and provide bridge access. All these roads can be reached via PA Route 18, which runs along the eastern edge of the Conneaut Creek valley. A railroad grade also parallels most of this section of the stream, allowing more adventuresome anglers to walk in to their favorite runs and pools, and get away from the bridge crowds.

As Conneaut Creek flows north toward the Erie County line, it deepens and slows, losing all resemblance to trout water. Smallmouth bass and panfish begin to appear in fishable numbers near the county line, the first indicator of the excellent warmwater fishery to be found farther downstream. Near the village of Keepville, a short distance north of the Erie County line, the West Branch of Conneaut Creek arrives from its journey through the marshy southwest corner of the county, and adds its flow to the main stem. The West Branch is a very slow-moving waterway, which, according to Area Fisheries Manager Craig Billingsley, has quite good water quality and decent populations of largemouth bass and rock bass.

### Middle reaches

The middle reaches of the Pennsylvania section of Conneaut Creek, from the Erie County line downstream to the vicinity of PA Route 215 below the borough of Albion, are noted for their musky fishery. This entire portion of the stream features slow, deep holes with few riffles. There are numerous downed trees along the bank that provide cover for the big fish, and abundant forage in the form of suckers, large chubs and other fish.

The Conneaut Creek musky fishery is helped along by Fish

and Boat Commission plants of fingerlings each autumn. Good numbers of legal muskies are taken from the stream each year, mostly by anglers with the patience to locate one of these big, solitary fish and then stillfish for it with live bait such as large chubs or a sucker. The best time to connect with a Conneaut Creek 'lunge is in the late autumn or early winter. Occasionally, however, one of these toothy monsters surprises a summer bass angler and leaves his tackle in shambles.

According to AFM Craig Billingsley, walleye fry and fingerlings are stocked annually in these middle reaches of the stream near Albion. These fish add yet another dimension to the Conneaut Creek fishery.

Anglers visiting Conneaut Creek in the section near Albion

find more than muskies and scattered walleyes and smallmouth bass. They also find a group dedicated to the enhancement and protection of the entire watershed. The Albion Sportsmen's Club works hard to improve the fishing in Conneaut Creek and its tributaries. Each year in its raceways the club raises approximately 20,000 trout for stocking into several Conneaut Creek tributaries, including Temple Run and the East and West branches of the main stem. These fish are planted preseason and provide additional angling opportunities in a part of Pennsylvania with an otherwise very limited array of early season options for trout fishermen. According to long-time member Pete Stebnisky of Albion, the club also assists in the stocking of walleyes in Conneaut Creek, and makes sure that a good number of the trout stocked by the club are placed in waters where young people can easily fish for them.

Even though smallmouth bass can be found in

Conneaut Creek from the downstream portion of the stocked trout waters near Springboro all the way to the point where the stream leaves our state and enters Ohio, some sections are decidedly more productive for bass than others.

### Lower reaches

Slightly upstream from the crossroads village of Cherry Hill, Conneaut Creek sees a significant increase in gradient, and its substrate turns from primarily mud and silt to shale and small rocks. Steep banks of layered shale enclose many portions of the stream from Cherry Hill all the way to the Ohio line.

This transformation in the nature of the stream brings with it vastly improved conditions and habitat for smallmouth bass,





and this section of Conneaut Creek is full of them. The very good riffle/pool ratio in this section of the stream provides highly oxygenated water for the bass during periods of hot weather. The many long pools of intermediate depth are littered with large chunks of shale that provide cover for the bass, as well as their primary sources of food such as crayfish and minnows.

These lower portions of the Pennsylvania section of Conneaut Creek are made for wading on summer days. Most of the pools and flats are easily waded, and the wooded surroundings are very beautiful. Only a few houses can be seen from the stream throughout this entire section, and they are a good distance away. The lower sections

# CONNEAUT CREEK: Waterway for All Seasons

of Conneaut Creek flow through one of the most isolated sections of Erie County, and when you are here, it's hard to imagine there is a metropolitan area of over a quarter-million people only a half-hour's drive away.

Drifting a live softshell crayfish through the pockets and pools is a very productive way to take Conneaut Creek bass. Nightcrawlers and hellgrammites are also productive baits.

Spin fishermen should stay with smaller crankbaits and spinners, especially in the lower flows of summer. Small crankbaits in the 1/4-ounce range work best. Cast close to likely holding cover. Stream smallmouth like to hide behind rocks and under sunken logs as they wait to ambush their next meal.



The generally shallow pools and abundant cover make this section of Conneaut Creek a good place to try your luck for smallmouth with a fly rod. Try dropping small poppers along the deeper, shaded banks and along the dropoffs created by the overlapping sheets of shale on the stream bottom. Woolly Buggers in black or olive and Zonkers in all black or brown shades are deadly when drifted along rocky banks or beside in-stream logs. Keep your flies on the smaller side, especially in low water. Poppers in sizes 6 to 10 work best. The same sizes should be your choice when fishing wet with Woolly Buggers or Zonkers.

Access to this section of Conneaut Creek is reasonably good. There is some scattered posting near the U.S. Route 6N bridge, but otherwise the stream is mostly open. The Cherry Hill road heads west off Route 6N at Cherry Hill, and leads to SR 3001 (Griffey Road), which bridges the stream. Beyond the bridge, Griffey Road intersects with Clover Road, which parallels the east bank of the stream nearly to the Ohio line and offers several points of walk-in access.



## Steelhead

With stocked trout in its upper reaches, good musky angling throughout the waters above and below Albion and the fine smallmouth fishing in the section below Cherry Hill, Conneaut Creek would be more than justified to sit back and rest on its laurels. Yet, the stream has one ace remaining up its sleeve, and it's a big one. As a direct tributary of Lake Erie, Conneaut Creek hosts a significant run of steelhead each year from October through April. Almost all the fish are in the stream as a result of the steelhead program administered by the state of Ohio, but good numbers of them make the 25-mile journey from Conneaut harbor into the Pennsylvania section of the stream, and beyond. Some Conneaut Creek steelhead make the trek all the way to the headwaters near Linesville, a distance of well over 50 miles from the lake.

The Conneaut Creek steelhead fishery differs in several ways from that found in the more popular steelheading destinations along the Erie shoreline, like Elk and Walnut creeks.

According to AFM Craig Billingsley, the density of fish reaching Pennsylvania waters is considerably lower than that in the other tribs. Additionally, because of the longer journey they must make from the big lake, the Conneaut Creek fish tend to arrive somewhat later in the season than in the other tributaries. Late November and all of December are prime times, as are January and February if the stream remains unlocked during the cold northwest Pennsylvania winter.

Despite the lower steelhead density and the later arrival of fish in numbers, Conneaut Creek steelheading also has some major advantages. Angling pressure is almost nil, when compared to the frequently crowded conditions on the other tribs. The large, agricultural nature of the watershed also ensures that there is always at least a little color to the stream, making the steelhead much easier to approach. Anyone who has watched Elk Creek throw two inches of rain into Lake Erie in less than 48 hours leaving a stream full of fish that are as spooky as wild brown trout and all but unapproachable will appreciate this attribute of Conneaut Creek.

The Conneaut Creek steelhead fishery is at its best in two separate portions of the watershed. The riffle/pool nature of the Cherry Hill to the Ohio line section makes it good holding water for steelhead. This section of Conneaut Creek is also the closest to the mouth, and the fish arrive here first.

At Albion, many steelhead are taken from Temple Run, a small Conneaut Creek trib that enters the main stem right in town. The Albion fairgrounds/borough park section of Temple Run is a good place to try, as is an eight-foot dam constructed farther upstream by the Bessemer railroad.

Conneaut Creek steelhead go for the same baits, lures and flies that work on the other tribs. Spawn sacks, small jigs with white or chartreuse tails, and maggots and grubs all work well. The fly angler can score best with glow bugs, wet flies like the Skunk and Royal Coachman as well as sucker spawn flies constructed of angora yarn.

With trout in the spring, bass in the summer and muskies, walleyes and steelhead in the autumn and winter, Conneaut Creek truly is a four-season fishery of outstanding quality for its region. Except for the dead of winter when you may need a pick, there is almost always something going on that is worth a piece of your precious angling time. I suggest you give it a try.



photo-Robert L. Petri



## Wild Steelhead?

For many years, it has been the conventional wisdom that very few steelhead entering Pennsylvania's Lake Erie watershed were the product of successful natural reproduction in the streams. The lack of suitable spawning habitat, the myriad of different strains of fish in the mix and high tributary water temperatures were all cited as reasons for this situation.

However, recent stream surveys conducted by AFM Craig Billingsley cast doubt on this long-held assertion. Billingsley believes that the contribution made by natural reproduction to the overall Lake Erie steelhead fishery may be "significantly underestimated." He bases his statements, in part, on recent surveys of the extreme Conneaut Creek headwaters and of Temple Run in the section flowing through the Albion borough park where fair numbers of juvenile steelhead were found during electrofishing sessions. The same situation was found in one of the tribs of nearby Walnut Creek.

Home-grown wild Pennsylvania steelhead in significant numbers? No one can say for sure, yet, but if it's true, it's all the more reason to practice catch and release while fishing the tribs.—RLP.

## Floating the Stream

The majority of the section of Conneaut Creek from slightly above Albion to Route 6N at Cherry Hill lends itself well to the float-fishing enthusiast. This portion of the stream is deep enough in most places to allow for easy canoe travel. From Cherry Hill to the Ohio line can also be float fished, but you can expect to pull as much mileage as you drift, especially in the summer. Float this section if you were planning on getting a new canoe this year, anyway.

Canoe access to the middle reaches of Conneaut Creek is available at the Route 6N bridge just west of Albion and at the PA Route 215 bridge farther downstream. There are other points of potential access on secondary roads all through the area. Check your maps. All the property in the area is privately held, so it's best to ask the landowner for permission before putting in or taking out.—RLP.



*That*

**BIG**

**WHITE**

**FLY**

*on Small Streams*

by Charles R. Meck

If you see a lot of white moths flying around lights at night in late June or early July, drop everything. I mean drop everything and go fishing on your favorite small stream. Take some size 12 or 14 White Moth patterns with you and get ready for some unbelievable matching-the-moth fishing! Fishing when the white moth appears can turn that so-so small stream into one teeming with rising trout. It can change a mediocre fishing experience into one you'll never forget. Let me explain.

Two previous fly fishing trips to this small native brook trout stream in northcentral Pennsylvania proved to be total disasters. On the first trip, in late April, Craig Josephson of Johnstown and I fly fished an entire day without as much as even seeing a trout, let alone catching one. What lousy small stream fly fishing! With such a terrible introduction I never wanted to return to this small stream again!

On the second outing, this time in early October, we didn't fare much better. In more than four hours of intense fly fishing we caught two trout. I don't consider two measly trout in more than a mile of what looked like prime brook trout water a good day. That's not very impressive. Now I knew I didn't want to return to this stream again.

After several weeks of coaxing by Craig Josephson, I decided to give the stream one more chance to prove its value. It had one more chance to show that, as Craig suggested, it held a good number of native trout. But after the two previous chances, I doubted it would.

This small mountain brook still held many great memories for Craig. Craig has fly fished this same stream for the past 25 years, and he still remembers fondly many 20- to 30-trout days. He'll never forget that day he caught his first trout on this stream. In the past he's experienced many times just how

*Fishing when the white moth appears can turn that so-so small stream into one teeming with rising trout. It can change a mediocre fishing experience into one you'll never forget.*



*White moth*

productive fishing this isolated small stream can be. How could we have done so poorly on a stream Craig thought held a lot of trout? After my first two trips to this stream I didn't believe for one minute I'd see any double digit trout days on this small stream. How could we have done so poorly on the two previous trips on a small mountain stream that Craig enjoyed? What had happened to the trout? Had angling pressure diminished the trout population so drastically?

We decided to fly fish this heavily canopied small stream one last time, in late June, and see if we had better results in summer instead of spring or fall. We hiked upstream more than a mile on a Game Commission road that roughly paralleled the stream. An unexpected heavy thunderstorm two hours before had muddied the road and discolored the stream somewhat. The road and the scenery along it seemed like all too familiar territory to me. I had done it two times before—and you already know the pitiful results we experienced with the previous two trips. I had no confidence we'd do any better this third time around.

We finally made a sharp turn off the dirt road, headed down a steep, rocky bank, and walked a few hundred feet to the stream. We didn't get closer than 50 feet when Craig pointed to a large white moth clumsily trying to fly above the stream. A light



*Fish when that big white fly appears unexpectedly on the surface and you might find that the small stream comes alive with feeding native trout.*

**White Fly, imitation of the adult white moth**



breeze dumped the awkward flier abruptly onto the surface and it disappeared almost immediately into the mouth of a 7-inch brook trout.

A trout rising on this small stream? Maybe, just maybe, I had rated it inaccurately. But one rising trout does not make a great day of fishing. Craig pointed to other white moths now flying close to the surface. Another one landed and it also disappeared with another vicious rise. Two white moths on the water and two trout rose! Will wonders never cease?

I quickly looked through my five-compartment fly box for anything that resembled that white moth. There it was right in front of me—Russ Mowry's size 14 White Fly pattern. The pattern had a white body, white wings and white hackle. I handed one to Craig and tied a second one on my 4X, seven-foot tip-pet. Craig hurried downstream while I began casting at the head of a small pool formed by a huge boulder. I cast just above the rock on the far side and as the fly landed on the surface it sank almost immediately. What? A strike on this barren stream? Yes! But the surprise of a strike on the first cast made me miss the trout. Anyway, that's a good excuse. Meanwhile, downstream, Craig hooked a six-inch brookie on that White Fly pattern.

I headed upstream to a three-foot deep pool with another huge boulder on the far side. Craig coached me to cast the White Fly alongside and just upstream from a huge boulder planted on the far side. The fly floated about a foot before it sank. I landed my first trout in three trips to this small northcentral Pennsylvania stream—a five-inch brookie. On the third cast

another trout, this one an inch or two longer than the first, hit the White Fly. Before I left that scenic pool I had landed three trout on that white pattern. Three trout in one pool? Yes, and I caught those trout in less than 10 minutes.

The next pool had some low overhanging branches just where trout should feed. Craig skillfully placed a White Fly just under the branch and it disappeared in seconds. Before he left that pool Craig picked up three brook trout, one eight inches long. All took the White Fly with a vengeance.

Craig and I leapfrogged upstream for the next mile-and-a-half of productive water. In just about every pool, riffle and section of pocket water we took trout—in many small pools two and three trout chased that White Fly. Few of these trout rose, but when they saw the White Moth pattern land on the surface, they viciously attacked it. The stream that evening readily, almost eagerly, gave up its bountiful supply of brightly colored brook trout. In those few hours of evening fly fishing on that small, mountain brook, Craig and I released more than 30 trout. All had aggressively struck the White Fly pattern. In one pool I got the fly pattern hooked in a branch and when I tried to shake the fly loose, 30 to 40 white moths flew out of the tree. Some of these landed on the surface and trout that I had not scared took them freely.

By 9:00 p.m. darkness had arrived at the stream, and as much as we hated to quit, we had to call it a day of fishing. We headed back down the familiar dirt road to our car, shining our flashlights in front of us as the last glimmer of daylight faded in the



# That **BIG** **WHITE** **FLY** *on Small Streams*

west. Our total discussion centered around the great couple of hours of fly fishing we had just experienced. We had finally seen this reputedly top-notch small stream at its zenith. After three

tries it showed us how really productive it could become.

On the way back to the car we speculated why the stream had given its trout so generously. One important item changed the equation in our favor that evening—the white moth. Evidently that terrestrial had appeared for several weeks and trout actively fed on it. One pattern, the White Fly, proved an adequate match for that moth. On that trip back to the car Craig and I remarked how the white moth and an appropriate imitation had instantly transformed this trip into a memorable one.

Where do you find the white moth, and how long do trout feed on it? Gregory Hoover, an entomologist and noted fly fishing author in the College of Agriculture at Penn State University, recently wrote a newsletter on the infestation problem with the larvae of the white moth. Here are some of his findings. The white moth is the breeding adult of the elm spanworm. This caterpillar defoliates many areas of the state. Most of the northern half of the state holds a good population of the elm spanworm—even Somerset and Cambria counties have experienced recent outbreaks. The heaviest outbreaks in 1993 occurred in Sullivan, Bradford, Warren, Elk, McKean, and Forest counties. Fifteen northern counties reported 30 percent or higher defoliation from this pest. The elm spanworm has defoliated hardwood trees in the Commonwealth since 1931.

Greg Hoover described the life cycle of the elm spanworm in his report. The adult white moth lays its eggs in mid-July. Caterpillars hatch the following May, just in time to strip oak, maple, elm, beech, ash and other hardwoods. They continue to grow until they are about two inches long.

In mid-June the caterpillars enter a resting stage called a pupa. This stage lasts for a couple of weeks. Adult white moths emerge from this resting stage in late June and early July. During this period many of the adults find their way onto the surface of many trout streams. Look for a heavily canopied stream with a good white moth population. You'll find white moths on or near the water for two to three weeks before they lay eggs and die. Moths become especially active at night, and if your area is infested you'll see the white moths flying around lights.

During the period of white moth activity, from late June until mid-July, you can experience some fantastic fly fishing, especially on small streams. Why on small streams? If you've fly fished small streams very much you already know that many have few hatches and a limited supply of food for the trout population. Add an ingredient like a white moth in the nearby environment and trout eagerly feed on this food bonanza.

You can tie the white moth pattern in several ways. Craig Josephson uses a Patriot attractor pattern with long white wings and finds that this works well during the white moth season. Evidently a size 12 or 14 Patriot with these oversized white impala wings stimulates trout to strike the pattern.

I tie the pattern on a Mustad 94833, size 12 or 14 dry fly hook. Wrap white poly yarn for the body. Make the body fairly thick to closely copy the natural. Tie in 10 white deer hairs at a 45-degree angle on the right and the left side. These white deer hairs copy the wings of the moth at rest. Clip the butts of the

deer hair and add a very small white hackle at the front to copy the legs.

Tie the caterpillar on a Mustad 94831, size 10 hook. Take a cylinder of black or gray polycelon and attach it to the hook with a drop or two of Super Glue. Before you place the polycelon, bring the black tying thread to the bend of the hook and tie in a small grizzly saddle hackle. Make four or five wraps with the thread over the polycelon tube to the eye of the hook. Palmer the hackle up to the eye of the hook, and cut off the excess. Use rust-brown tying thread to form a head just behind the eye of the hook, and whip-finish.

Greg Hoover reports two color phases with the elm spanworm. Caterpillars with green bodies are common, especially with lower overall populations. Take a few Green Inchworm patterns with you if you find some of the lighter colored larvae.

*Look for a heavily canopied stream with a good white moth population. You'll find white moths on or near the water for two to three weeks before they lay eggs and die.*

If you've ever watched the white moth try to escape from the surface of a stream, then you've already noted its exaggerated movement. If a drag-free float fails to attract any trout, try moving the pattern. Lifting the fly rod and dragging the pattern across the surface often brings even the most reluctant brook trout to the surface. Where food is at a premium, trout in these small streams will move several feet to take one of these white moths.

From the discussion so far you might think that you'll find this flying white terrestrial only on heavily canopied small streams. Not so! You also find them on larger streams and rivers across the northern half of the state. Any water in this area should have trout, and even bass, rising to the caterpillar and the adult white moth. Just ask Mike O'Brien, a skilled fly fisher from Williamsport, if white moths bring fish to the surface. Mike recalls many fishing trips during the summer of 1993 on the West Branch of the Susquehanna River between Williamsport and Muncy when smallmouth bass went on a feeding frenzy. Mike said that when a gust of wind dislodged some of the adults from nearby trees and placed them on the surface, he had incredible rises to a White Fly pattern on the river.

Maybe you can also experience unbelievable fishing trips to some of your favorite streams. Plan to fly fish on one of our many trout streams in the northern half of the state in May, June or July. Carry plenty of White Moth patterns to copy the adult elm spanworm so common near these streams. If you plan to fly fish in May and June, make certain you carry plenty of caterpillar patterns to copy the feeding larva. You'll find that trout readily feed on the larva and the adult.

If you hit a stream where you see some of these wandering terrestrials, you, too, might experience the fishing trip of a lifetime on your favorite small stream. Fish when that big white fly appears unexpectedly on the surface and you might find that the small stream comes alive with feeding native trout. It might also change your opinion about that small stream that you thought never held many native trout.

ANGLER



# Governor, Lieutenant Governor Visit Commission Sport Show Exhibit



Governor Tom Ridge receives his 1995 fishing license and trout/salmon permit from Commission President Paul J. Mahon (left) and Commissioner J. Wayne Yorks (center) during the 1995 Eastern Sports Show in Harrisburg, in February.



Visiting the Fish and Boat Commission exhibit during the Eastern Sports Show were (left to right) Commission Executive Director Peter A. Colangelo, Commission President Paul J. Mahon, Commissioner J. Wayne Yorks, Senator Edward W. Helfrick (R-Northumberland Co.), Governor Tom Ridge, Senator Eugene E. Porterfield (D-Westmoreland Co.), and Representative Bruce Smith (R-York Co.).



Lieutenant Governor Mark S. Schweiker receives his 1995 fishing license and trout/salmon permit from Commission President Paul J. Mahon (left) and Commission Executive Director Peter A. Colangelo (right).



Commission Bureau of Administrative Services employees Mayda Moyer (foreground) and Brenda Verner (next to Moyer) assist sport show visitors in buying fishing licenses and trout/salmon permits.





# Live Bait Systems FOR WALLEYES

BY DARL BLACK

**LAKE ERIE, PYMATUNING  
RESERVOIR, THE CONOWINGO POOL  
AND SECTIONS OF THE DELAWARE  
OFFER A YEAR-ROUND  
WALLEYE SEASON.**

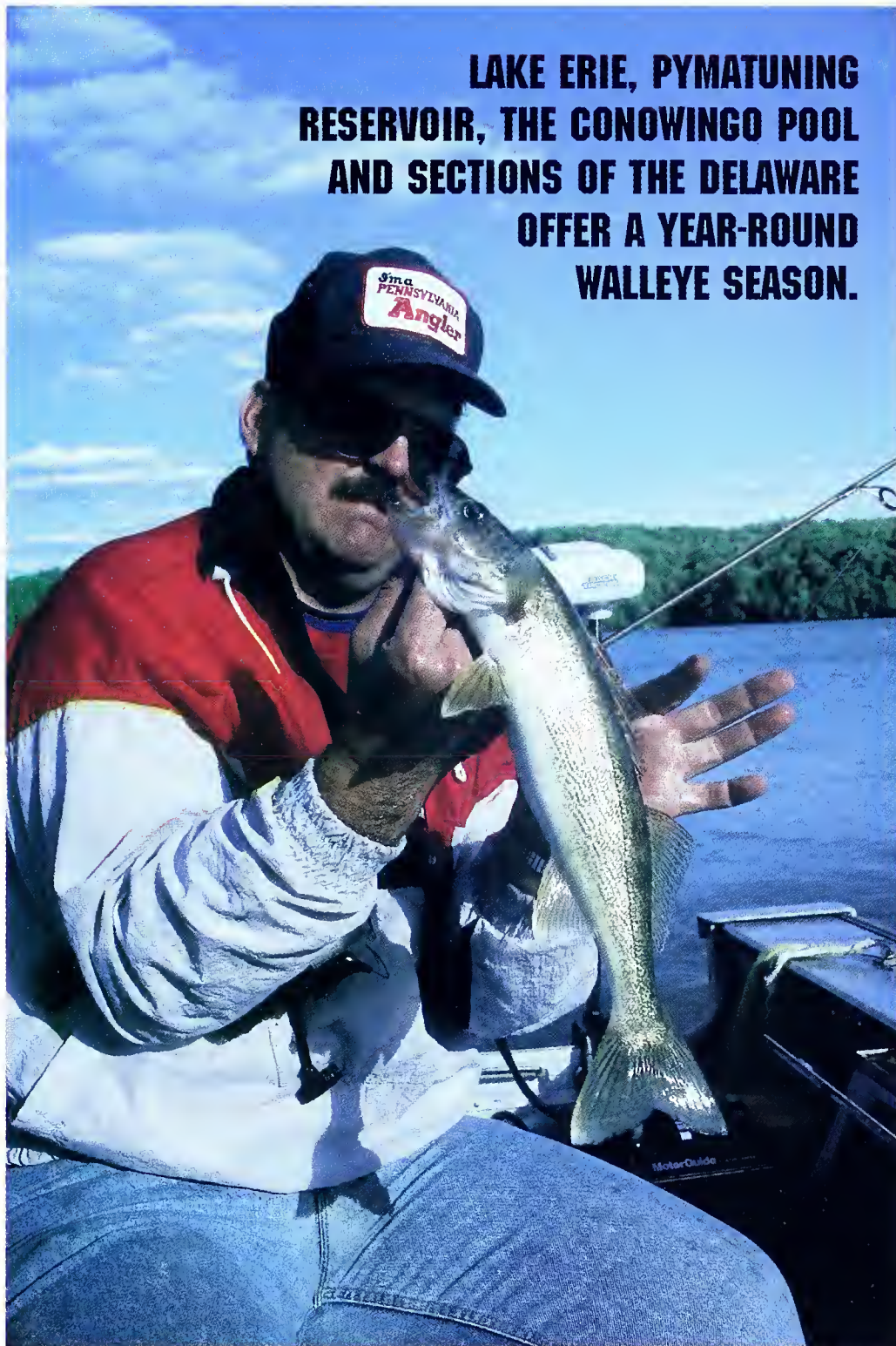


photo-Darl Black

No meal this side of heaven beats oven-fried Cajun walleye. To enjoy this delightful dinner, of course, one must have fresh walleye fillets. Here's a roundup of live bait delivery systems that will keep walleyes on the table.

## Best bait?

The most popular live baits for walleyes include nightcrawlers, leeches, minnows and large baitfish (shiners, suckers or chubs). But successful live bait fishing is not simply a matter of tying on a hook, baiting it up and throwing it out. Tackle and technique are the prerequisites to a successful fishing presentation.

Before examining individual rigs, consider for a minute the seasonal recommendations of live bait. Traditional thinking suggests that baitfish are best for walleyes when the water temperature is below 60 degrees, and that leeches or crawlers are best above 60. In recent years, some walleye tournament anglers have challenged this thinking. The answer is not as easy as true or false.

In part, seasonal recommendations revolve around availability as well as bait reaction in different water temperatures. Take leeches, for example. Bait shops carry leeches only from about mid-May to late August. You can't obtain them for fall, winter or early spring fishing. Besides, in cold water leeches roll up in a firm ball, thereby losing their squirming, fluttering attraction.

On the other hand, I have successfully used nightcrawlers in the early spring when water temperature was in the 40s and 50s. Crawlers, however, may not be available from bait stores in the late fall and winter.

Experienced anglers realize walleyes chow down on plentiful baitfish during the summer. But when it comes to the angler keeping baitfish during hot weather, it's a matter of survival. Warm water does not hold as much dissolved oxygen as cold water, so a min-



now bucket full of bait in the summer is quickly depleted of oxygen. Bait begins to die even before you reach the lake. Unless the angler is willing to care for minnows with aerated, cooled water in a livewell system similar to what a tournament angler does with the catch, you will not have lively baitfish for summer fishing.

Even though they require special care in warm weather, leeches and crawlers are much easier to keep alive than baitfish. The choice of bait for a particular season is as much a matter of convenience as anything.

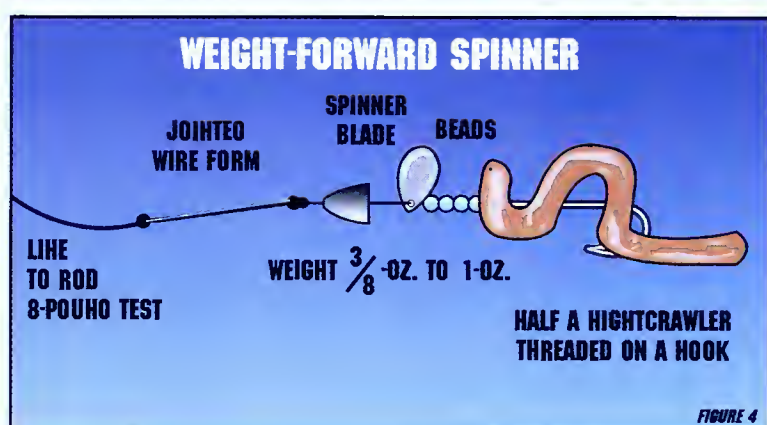
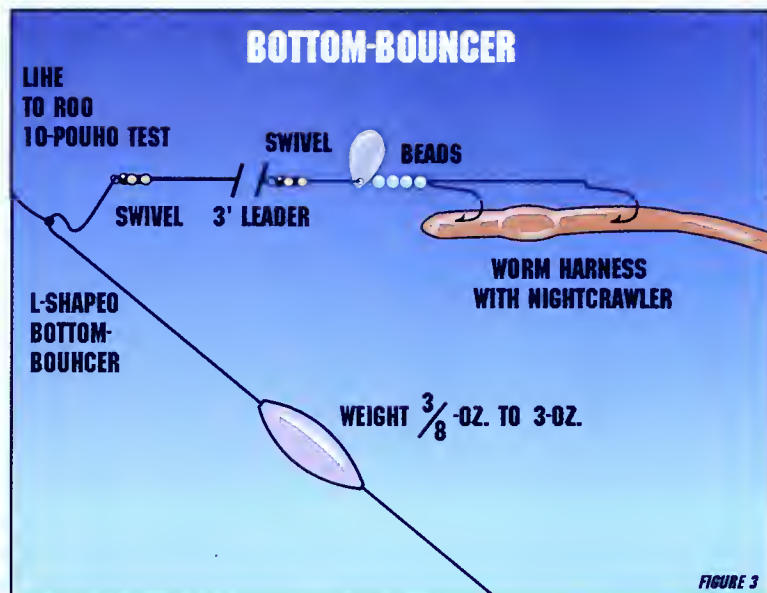
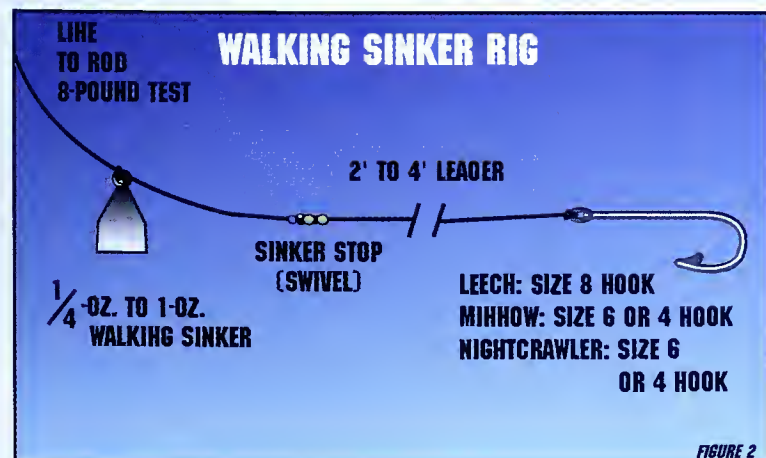
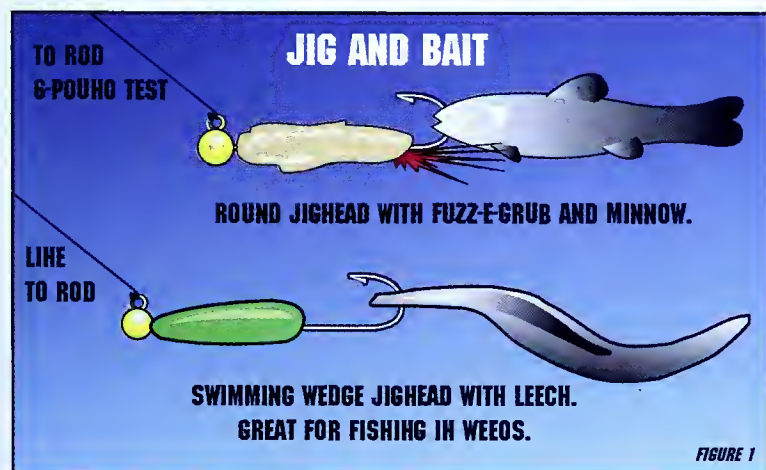
## Jig and bait

I suppose that a jig tipped with live bait is the single most productive method of catching walleyes. It is without a doubt my favorite. This is an extremely versatile approach that can be undertaken from shore or from a boat. The jig-and-live-bait combo is a year-round, go-anywhere presentation.

Even though it is possible to troll or drift with jigs, the jig-and-bait combo is at its best when cast and retrieved. It also works wonders for fishing vertically from a boat in deep water. In the hands of a good angler, a leadhead jig can precisely deliver live bait to within inches of a walleye's nose.

I favor the jig-and-minnow combo in fall, winter and spring. The ordinary ball or round-head jig design is the all-around choice, although certain circumstances might dictate another design. Jig weight typically ranges from 1/16-ounce to 1/2-ounce, depending on the depth, current or wind. My rule of thumb is to use the minimum weight necessary to maintain control. I carry jigheads in green chartreuse, yellow chartreuse, orange and pearl white. The minnow is generally a two-inch to three-inch fathead, easily obtained at bait stores.

Slipping a soft-plastic body on the jighead before hooking a minnow is second nature to me. This is usually a Fuzz-E-



Grub, although a piece of plastic worm may be used instead. The plastic body adds color, which improves visibility to the walleye and creates the illusion of a larger bait. However, if it is determined that a smaller bait is better, leave the plastic off.

Generally I avoid rigging a stinger hook on a jighead because it increases hang-ups. But following Allegheny and Ohio River outings with *Pennsylvania Angler* contributor Jeff Knapp, I am convinced that in the coldest water of midwinter, a stinger hook is valuable insurance for lethargic bait-sucking walleyes. When Knapp puts six walleyes in the boat to my one, even though we had the same number of pickups, and all his fish are hooked only on the stinger, well, I can clearly see the writing on the water.

Crawler and leech-tipped jigs are preferred for summer fishing. When using a leech, I favor a jighead without soft-plastic dressing—there is something about fishing a leech as plain as possible that seems to make it work. However, when using crawlers, I prefer a leadhead with a dark-colored soft-plastic body and only a piece of crawler. When properly hooked through the sucker, leeches hold up to casting and repeated hits. Worms, however, are easily torn from the hook. Therefore, it's more economical to use only a half or third of a nightcrawler—just enough for scent, taste and a little squirming action.

Fishing around summer vegetation requires a different jighead design. A swimming wedge-style jig with the line tie in the very tip of the head slides through weed strands much better than a ball head. Both Northland and Lindy offer jigheads of this design.

A fast-tip, six-foot medium/light power spinning rod spooled with six-pound or eight-pound-test monofilament is standard for jig fishing.





## Live Bait Systems FOR WALLEYES

The most common bottom-bouncer design is an upside down "L" shaped wire with a heavy weight on the long arm. The weight

ranges from 3/8-ounce to three ounces. A monofilament leader with spinner rig is tied to a swivel on the shorter arm, while the line from the reel is attached at the junction of the two arms. Of course, this rig is designed for trolling, not casting.

"Bottom-bouncers have a lot of potential for Pennsylvania walleyes, yet very few anglers seem to realize it," says Jeff Knapp, who has considerable experience with the system. "On large lakes with extensive deep flats, bottom-bouncers are an excellent way to cover water. With a spinner rig behind them, bouncers are a search tool to find defined structure or to locate schooled walleyes. Besides the advantage of moving along at a steady pace, the rig is relatively snagless because the long wire arm contacts the bottom instead of a walking sinker. However, that does not make bouncers completely snag-resistant."

Even though blade sizes vary, a typical bouncer rig consists of either a small size 1 Indiana single spinner with a size 8 bait hook baited with a leech, or a size 3 Colorado spinner worm harness with a nightcrawler. The leader between the bouncer and the spinner rig should be at least three feet long.

"On dark or stained water, I've had better luck with chartreuse or orange blades—especially orange," advises Knapp. "If the water is clear, then I would go with chrome or pearl. I tie my own spinner rigs using eight-pound line."

Bottom bouncers are frequently run with in-line side planers to move the bait away from being trolled in a direct line with the boat. A fairly stiff, medium-

### Walking sinker rig

The Lindy Walking Sinker Rig revolutionized deepwater walleye fishing across the north country in the late 1960s. Today the rig has been copied and improved by several tackle manufacturers. The basic rig consists of a walking slip sinker, a sinker stop (usually a swivel), and a two- to four-foot leader between the sinker stop and a live bait hook. The bait may be a leech, crawler or minnow.

Unlike a jig, a walking sinker rig is not designed for casting. The rig is specifically intended for systematically searching structure breaklines by backtrolling. By continually bouncing the sinker on the bottom during a very slow trolling pass, the angler knows the live bait is within the probable walleye strike zone of one to three feet off the bottom.

The bait is presented in a natural manner, drifting weightlessly on the end of a leader. The leader allows a walleye to inhale the live bait without resistance. In theory, this increases the number of fish hooked by anglers who are inexperienced at detecting strikes and setting hooks. By using sinkers up to one ounce in weight, live bait can be presented in very deep water.

A slightly stiffer and longer rod than you'd use for jig fishing is recommended for rigging. Eight-pound-test line usually gets the nod.

### Bottom-bouncer

Perhaps the advantage of bottom-bouncers can be summed up in one word: speed. Bottom-bouncers allow the angler to move fairly quickly over large expanses of water to locate schools of biting walleyes. Bottom-bouncers fish quicker than jigs or walking sinker rigs.

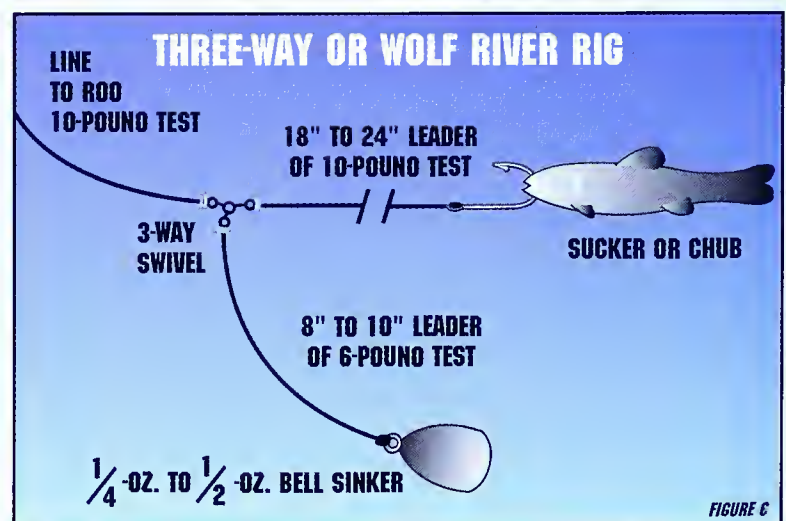
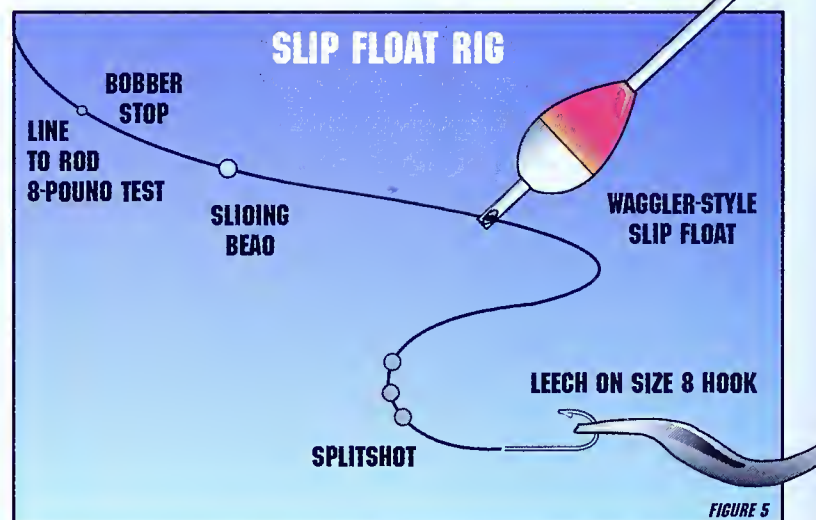


Photo: Darr Black, bait graphics: Ted Walker



## **SUCCESSFUL LIVE BAIT FISHING IS NOT SIMPLY A MATTER OF TYING ON A HOOK, BAITING IT UP AND THROWING IT OUT. TACKLE AND TECHNIQUE ARE THE PREREQUISITES TO A SUCCESSFUL FISHING PRESENTATION.**

action baitcasting outfit spooled with 10- or 12-pound test is recommended by Knapp.

### **Weight-forward spinner**

The weight-forward spinner features a jointed wire shaft with a fixed weight followed by a spinner blade, several beads and finally a long-shank hook. The single hook is baited with a nightcrawler. It is designed for casting.

Bud Riser, founder of Walleye International, says the weight-forward is a much more versatile live bait presentation than most anglers believe.

"Its reputation was built on catching Erie's Western Basin walleyes, which suspend 10 to 25 feet under the surface in the summer. Of course, today we realize that walleyes in many lakes suspend in the open water far more frequently than ever suspected 20 years ago, so that alone expands the use of the weight-forward rig. The weight-forward is an excellent countdown lure for those in-between fish, with the 5/8-ounce lure falling at one foot per second. When a slow retrieve is started, the weight-forward holds that depth for most of the retrieve.

"Besides suspended walleyes, I often throw a weight-forward baited with a crawler along a shoreline where others might toss a crankbait. It takes walleyes no matter where they are located, including creeks and rivers."

For some time I questioned whether feeding walleyes would hit a weight-forward without a crawler. This was answered when Riser and I fished together during the production of a walleye video. With a school of walleyes holding at 15 feet over a 28-foot bottom, I fished a plain weight-forward while Riser baited up with a crawler. Riser caught all the fish until I gave in and tipped the spinner with crawler. The flashing blade focuses the 'eye's attention, but suspended walleyes seem reluctant to strike unless they can smell and taste live bait.

"The crawler should not be hooked just once. Too many fish will be missed," stresses Riser. "The best way is to 'stitch' about half the crawler on the hook, just like using a needle and thread. Then break the crawler off, leaving no more than one inch dangling. Save the other half for use later. Breaking the crawler releases a stronger scent trail."

Either a six-foot spinning or casting outfit in the medium power range with a fast tip is suggested by Riser, coupled with 8-pound-test line.

### **Slip float**

Presenting live bait with a bobber or float can be deadly under certain circumstances. Float fishing is productive when the exact location of fish is known or strongly suspected. It is not an approach to take when searching for fish.

I fall back to a slip float when cover greatly hampers a jig presentation or when walleyes are in a non-aggressive mood. Instances include times when walleyes are foraging in a weedbed, or when they are holding tight to stumps. Jumbo leeches are preferred over crawlers because leeches hold up better to annoying hits from small panfish.

Walleyes forage in weedbeds a greater percentage of time than many anglers realize. The highest activity occurs just after sunrise and at dusk. The float is set to prevent the leech from disappearing in the bottom mat of vegetation. The rig is cast to open pockets in the weedbed.

Another common occurrence is inactive walleyes holding on a group of stumps. A float can be set so the leech dances enticingly in front of the fish without drifting into the roots and becoming snagged.

The rig consists of a bobber stop (adjustable knot tied with Dacron line), sliding bead (to prevent the float from hanging on the stop knot), a slip float, splitshot, and a size 8 bait hook. The European waggler-style slip float is my number one choice. This is an extremely sensitive float that can be balanced with splitshot to make it practically neutrally buoyant. In addition, this style of float allows the line to the rod to be buried underwater so wind and waves do not pull the float off target.

For floats, a softer-action spinning rod in a 6 1/2- to eight-foot length is recommended. Line test may be as light as six-pound, but eight- or 10-pound is better.

### **Three-way bottom rig**

A final live bait rig in the arsenal is the three-way, or Wolf River Rig. This is a still-fishing bottom-hugging presentation especially suited for large baitfish like shiners, suckers or chubs. Because of the sinker break-away aspect, it receives high marks from river anglers during the fall.

Although there are several ways of tying this setup, the basic concept includes a sinker on an auxiliary leader of light line. If snagged in bottom debris, the weight can be sacrificed to save the valuable large live bait.

A three-way swivel is frequently used as the junction point for (a) an 18- to 24-inch leader of 10-pound test with a hook large enough for a sucker or chub, (b) an eight- to 10-inch leader of four- or six-pound-test line for the sinker, and (c) the main line to the reel, which is the same pound-test as the bait leader.

This rig may be fished effectively with almost any outfit. A medium-power spinning rod with 10-pound line is a good choice.

With a little something presented for every angler, that's a wrap on special delivery live bait systems. Now, following a successful day on the lake or river, it's time to prepare fillets for dinner.

**ANGLER**

### **OVEN-FRIED CAJUN WALLEYE**

- two pounds of walleye fillets cut into serving-size pieces.
- 1/2 cup milk.
- one cup of very fine, dry bread crumbs, mixed with 2 heaping tablespoons of Cajun seasoning (a blend of white, black and red pepper; thyme, onion powder, garlic powder, paprika, salt).
- 1/4 cup margarine, melted.

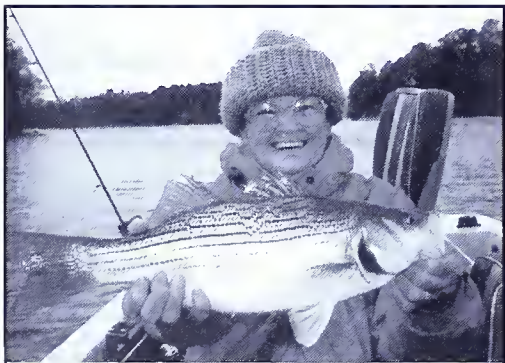
Heat oven to 500 degrees. Dip fillets in milk. Coat with bread crumbs/Cajun seasoning. Place in greased baking pan. Pour melted butter over fish. Bake uncovered for 12 minutes, or until fish flakes easily. Enjoy!—DB.



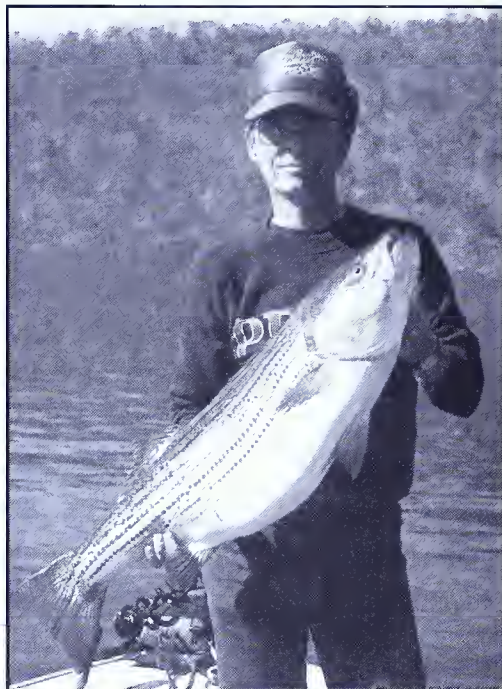
# Cast and Caught



*This is just one of many walleyes my husband Vince and I caught while on our summer vacation at Lake Erie. We caught several walleyes, steelhead and salmon, and plan to return for more fishing. Our trip proved that you don't have to leave the state to have a great fishing trip.—Roxane Palone, Waynesburg, PA.*



*Beatrice and Leonard Nester, of Royersford, show off two of the fish they caught while fishing on Blue Marsh Lake. The hybrid striper was 23 inches long and nearly 6 1/2 pounds. The catfish measured 27 inches in length. They said the fishing on the lake last year was the best they had ever experienced.*



*Hollidaysburg resident Charles Robertson used live bait to fool this striped bass. The Raystown Lake fish weighed 22 pounds, 4 ounces and was 38 1/2 inches long.*



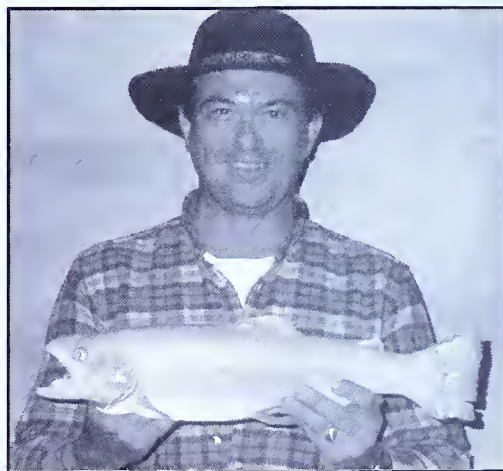
*Karl Koslowski, Bethlehem, holds the 25 1/2-inch rainbow trout he caught in the Lehigh Canal at Walnutport. The fish weighed 7 1/2 pounds.*



*Michelle Carney, of Verona, was on a fishing trip at Lake Erie when she caught this smallmouth bass. The fish, caught on a jig-and-minnow combo, was 19 inches long and weighed 4 pounds, 14 ounces.*



*Ephrata resident Curtis Sanders was fishing with a bobber and minnow when he hooked this tiger musky. The 36-inch fish was caught in the Susquehanna River at Lake Aldred.*



*Ted Hegedus, of Plainwell, MI, is proud of the palomino trout he hooked while fishing in Oil Creek last May. The fish was 20 1/2 inches long.*



## Faces Changing in Commission's Law Enforcement Bureau

Some familiar faces are missing along our streams in 1995 because a dozen Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Waterways Conservation Officers (WCOs) have retired.

The 12 include 10 field officers, a regional supervisor and an assistant to the director. The retirees leave with 342 years of combined experience, averaging 28.5 years apiece with the Commission. Lycoming County WCO James H. Lauer leads the group with an amazing 41 years of employment with the agency. Lauer began as a fish culturist in 1953 before his appointment in 1966 as Lycoming County WCO. He has served there for the last 28 years.

Other retiring WCOs include:

H. Porter Duvall, 29 years of service. York County, 1965-1969; Jefferson County, 1970-1994.

Stanley G. Hastings, 30 years of service. Cameron County 1964-1994.

Jay Johnston, 27 years of service. Bucks County, 1967-1978; Clinton County 1978-1994.

Robert Kish, 20 years of service. Cambria County, 1974-1994.

E. William Mantzell, 27 years of service. Washington County, 1967-1975; Lycoming County, 1976-1994.

Richard R. Roberts, 30 years of service. Susquehanna County, 1964-1994.

Eugene Scobel, 28 years of service. Butler County, 1966-1994.

John W. Weaver, 27 years of service. Northampton County, 1967-1975; Columbia County, 1975-1994.

Ammon F. Ziegenfus, 27 years of service. Berks County, 1967-1994.

Also retiring are Southwest Region Supervisor Thomas F. Qualters, Sr., and James R. Smith, Assistant to the Bureau Director. Qualters takes with him 30 years of law enforcement experience. He started his career as a district officer in Cambria County during 1964. In 1966 he was named assistant regional supervisor in the Southwest. He assumed the regional manager position in 1972.

Smith started in Allegheny County in 1968. He moved to Armstrong County in 1975 where he remained for 10 years. He finished his career as an assistant to the bureau director, where his primary

duties involved overseeing the law enforcement training programs.

Bureau of Law Enforcement Director Edward W. Manhart praised the retirees, noting they take with them a wealth of experience. "Many of the successes the Fish and Boat Commission has experienced over the past three decades can be credited to these and other fine WCOs, particularly in areas such as pollution control and law enforcement technique. We can all take pride in knowing their untiring efforts have enabled millions of Pennsylvanians to enjoy superior fishing and boating opportunities," said Manhart.

Manhart has also announced replacements for the two vacant administrative posts and the Southwest Region positions. Smith's post was filled by Jeff Bridi. Bridi, who holds a bachelor's degree in biology and a master's degree in ecology, began his law enforcement career with the Commission in 1988. After his initial assignment in Montgomery/Berks County, Bridi moved to northern Luzerne County in 1992.

Qualters was replaced by long-time Southwest Region Assistant Supervisor Anthony B. Murawski. Murawski served as WCO for Cambria County from 1967 to 1974. He was named the Southwest Assistant Supervisor in 1974. Replacing Murawski as Southwest Region's Assistant Supervisor is Emil T. Svetahor. Svetahor was the E. Armstrong/Indiana counties WCO since 1984.--Dan Tredinnick.

## WCOs Move to New Districts

Ten Fish and Boat Commission Waterways Conservation Officers (WCOs) have been assigned new districts. The new assignments were prompted by recent WCO retirements.

New assignments include: Berks County: John V. Sabaitis; Cambria County: Christopher D. McDevitt; Clinton County: Robert F. Mader; Columbia/Montour/E. Northumberland counties: Mark T. Pisko; E. Crawford County: Terry J. Crecraft; N. Luzerne County: James C. Stout; Indiana/E. Armstrong counties: George J. Kavish; Jefferson County: Richard M. Valazak; Lycoming County: Lawrence. P. Dvorshock; and Susquehanna County: Bryan C. Bendock.

## Ford New Agency Planner

The Fish and Boat Commission recently named Thomas P. Ford as the agency's new resource planning coordinator. Ford is responsible for overseeing the Commission's strategic planning process and assisting in developing the agency's resource-based programs. He is a graduate of Carnegie-Mellon University, holding a bachelor's degree in industrial management and a master's degree in public management and policy.



Thomas P. Ford

Immediately before joining the Fish and Boat Commission, Ford was employed by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources (DER) as an Environmental Policy Specialist. As a participant in the Office of Administration's Pennsylvania Management Intern Program before joining DER, Ford had also worked with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Department of Transportation, Office of Administration and the Department of Agriculture.

## Rental Reservations Accepted at North East Marina

The Fish and Boat Commission is now accepting reservations for 1995 slip rentals at its North East Marina. The season runs from April 15 to November 6. Sleeping aboard boats at a slip will be permitted. Sleeping in campers or vehicles in the parking lot will not be allowed.

For more information on slip rental, boaters may call the Fish and Boat Commission at (814) 359-5152.

The Commission's public access area adjacent to the marina will continue to offer small craft launching at no charge.



## NAWEOA Conference

The Fish and Boat Commission and the Game Commission are co-hosting this year's North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association (NAWEOA) annual conference July 25 to 30 at the Radisson Penn Harris Hotel and Conference Center, Camp Hill. The six-day event includes seminars, exhibits, specialized programs and a warden skills competition. Some 1,000 officers



and their families are expected to attend. NAWEOA is an organization of more than 6,000 conservation officers from across the United States and Canada. The association increases communication among officers from many jurisdictions, promotes professionalism among conservation officers, and aids the wise use of our natural resources.



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

### EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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Lawrence W. Hoffman, *Executive Assistant*  
Dennis T. Guise, *Chief Counsel*  
John Arway, *Division of Environmental Services*  
Joseph A. Greene, *Legislative Liaison*  
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### COMPTROLLER

Ross E. Stamer

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Rafael Perez-Bravo, *Personnel*  
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Eugene O. Banker, P.E., *Division of Property Services*

### BUREAU OF LAW ENFORCEMENT 717-657-4542

Edward W. Manhart, *Director*

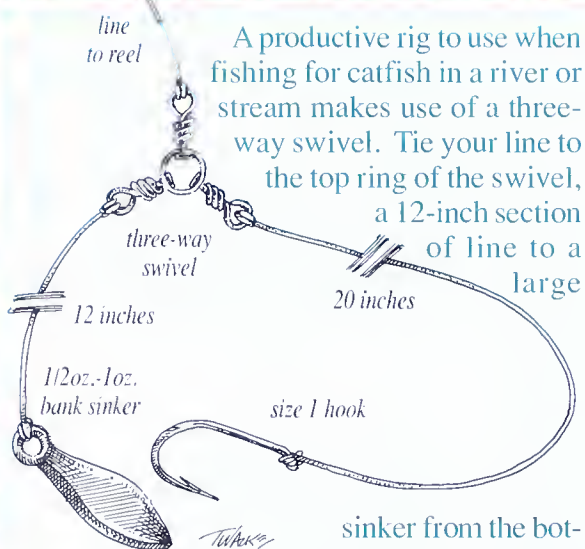
### BUREAU OF BOATING 717-657-4540

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Larry Shaffer, *Video, Special Events*  
Ted R. Walke, *Graphic Services*

## Angler's Notebook by Jeff Bryan



A productive rig to use when fishing for catfish in a river or stream makes use of a three-way swivel. Tie your line to the top ring of the swivel, a 12-inch section of line to a large sinker from the bottom ring of the swivel, and an 20-inch section of line from the middle ring of the swivel to your bait. This rig keeps your bait near the bottom, while letting it swing in the current.

Many of the best fishing spots are far from access points and parking areas. Instead of walking long distances in your waders, which can be hard on felt soles, wear tennis shoes or boots instead, and carry your waders over your shoulder. After pulling your waders on, hide your boots or shoes under a bush or log, near the spot where you entered the water. Be sure to mark the spot carefully so you can find it on your way out.

Never leave a pond or lake until you have fished the weeds. Lily pads and weed beds often hold the largest fish, and should be worked thoroughly. Use a weedless spoon and add a trailer of pork rind. This lure rides along the tops of the weeds, but you should also let it drop into any pockets or holes you might see. Keep the rod tip high when retrieving the lure.

When fishing for muskies, pike or pickerel, retrieve your lure right up to the edge of the boat. Members of pike family often follow a lure for a long way, only to strike at the last moment. Once you have the lure close to you, try running the bait in a figure-eight pattern next to the boat. This sometimes causes a wary fish to strike viciously.

Light line casts farther than heavier line when spinfishing. Use the lightest line possible for the type of fishing you are doing. Remember to quit reeling if the fish is taking line, because reeling against the drag is a major cause of dreaded "line twist."

Flying fish scales can be an annoyance when cleaning a fish. Try scraping the scales while holding the fish underwater in a large pan. The scales will float to the top, which makes cleaning up a lot easier.

When tying a fly that requires you to tie a deer hair wing, and not have it spin around the hook shank, the key is to make two loose wraps of thread around the hair before pulling the thread straight down, with pressure. This trick lets you maintain control over the hair, and stop it from slipping beneath the shank.

While fly fishing at night, it is sometimes difficult to pick a new fly from your fly box, tie on a new tippet section, or thread the line through the eye of the hook, all while juggling a flashlight. One way to speed the process is to have a loop tied in the end of your leader, and a selection of flies pre-tied to tippet sections with loops in the ends of the line, hanging from your vest. It is then a simple matter to loop on another fly and tippet section.

Illustration- Ted Walke



# SMART

## Angler's Notebook

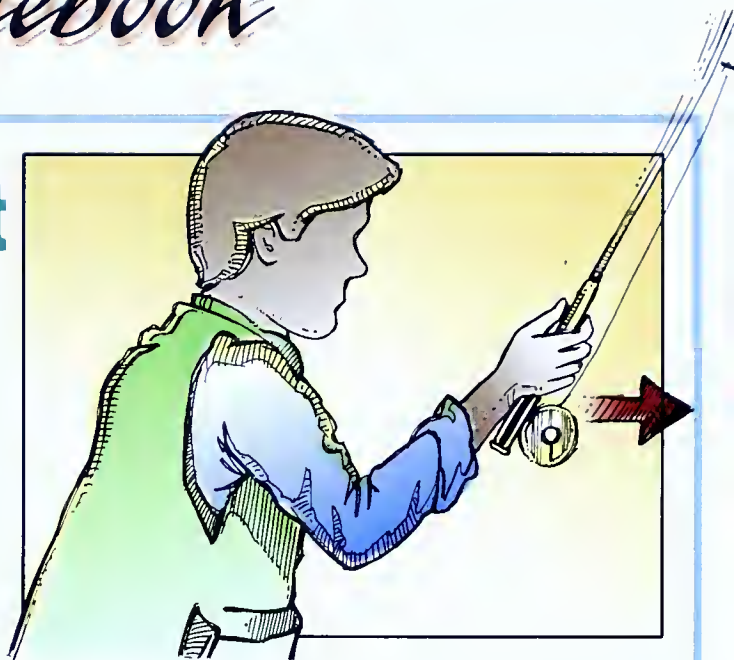
by Carl Richardson

### Practice Makes Perfect

Don't wait until you can get on the water to use your casting skills. Practice in your backyard will make you a better caster on the water. Make backyard casting practice more than just standing out in the yard, casting your arm off. Work on controlling your distance and being more accurate. Use your imagination and this practice may even be fun!

### PRACTICE PLUGS

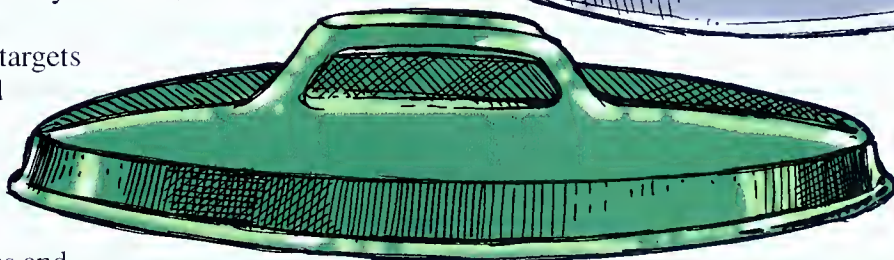
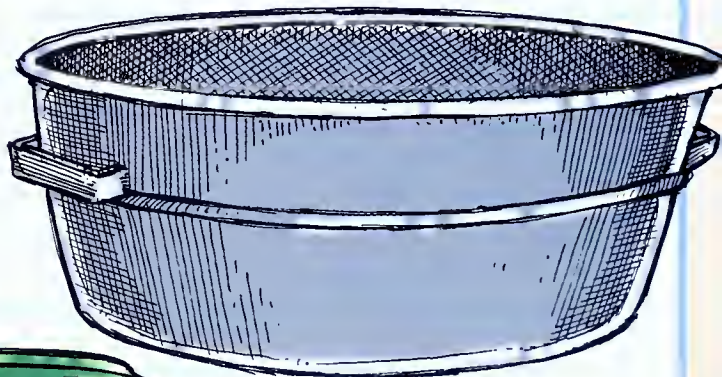
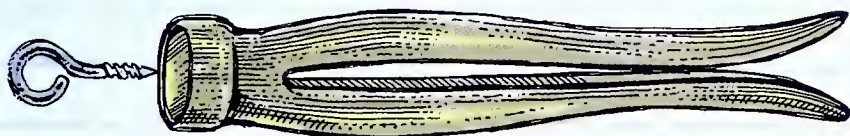
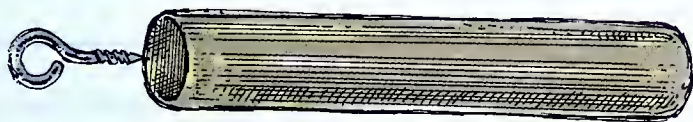
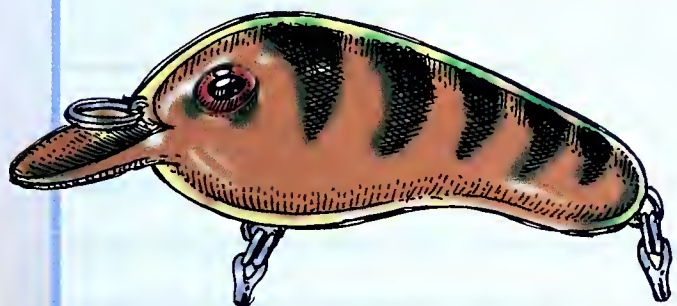
You don't want to throw anything with hooks, but you still need to have something with weight to let you cast properly. Most tackle shops now sell practice plugs, or follow the plans below to make your own.



1. CUT OFF OR REMOVE THE HOOKS FROM AN OLD, WORN OUT FISHING LURE.
2. INSERT A SCREW EYE IN THE END OF A WOODEN CLOTHESPIN, OR SMALL SECTION OF A WOODEN DOWEL. TIE THE LINE TO THE EYE.

### TARGETS

Hula hoops, trash can lids or wash tubs are ideal. For more of a challenge, use milk or bleach jugs.



### CASTING EXERCISES

Distance without accuracy is worthless. Work on combining the two in your practice. Start with one or two targets 20 to 30 feet away. When you can hit those with most of your casts, move some targets closer or farther away.

For more of a challenge, scatter your targets around the yard so you have to pitch around or through trees or other obstacles. Remember, fish are most often found around cover, not in the open. Give each target some point value and keep score. This is like throwing darts or horseshoes and is more fun with others.

Play FISH, a contest like HORSE, which is played by basketball players. One caster makes a trick or hard cast, and the other tries that same cast. The caster missing the target or not making the cast gets a letter from the word FISH. The casters switch and take turns. The first one to get all the letters in the word FISH loses.

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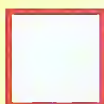
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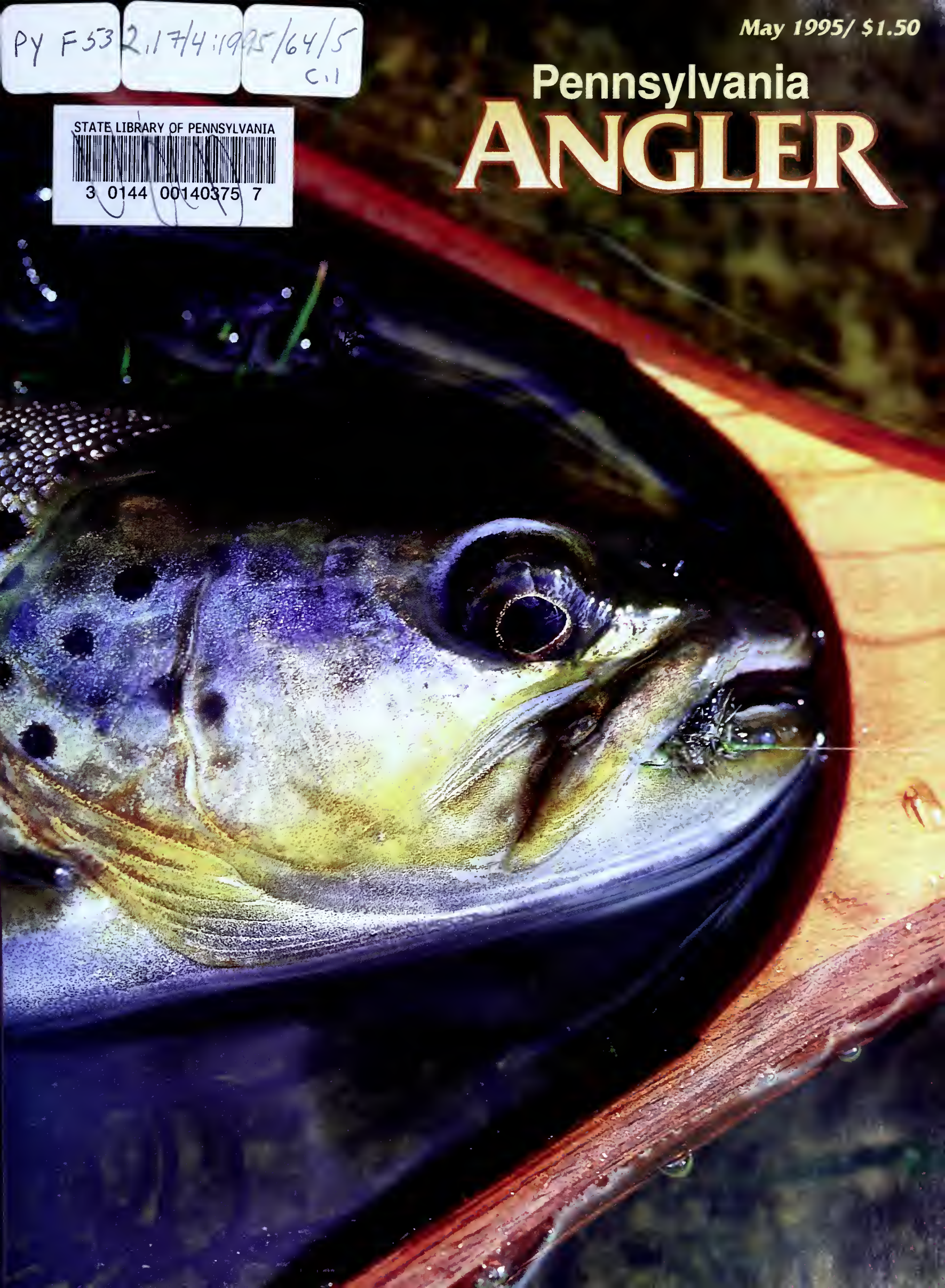
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# *Straight Talk*

## **Little Toby Creek Watershed: Its Future Looks Clean**

I'm pleased to report that the future for the Little Toby Creek Watershed in Elk and Jefferson counties looks great. Yes, there are plans and it appears there is federal money to restore its water quality, which has been polluted by acid mine drainage (AMD) for many years. When accomplished, Little Toby Creek will be a restored or improved trout fishery.

Recently, representatives of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission participated in a signing ceremony for the Statement of Mutual Intent for an Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative. Larry Hoffman and John Arway, from the Commission, attended the ceremonies in Washington, D.C. on February 9th. The plans for this Appalachian project involve improving the water quality of streams that have been polluted by acid mine drainage (AMD) from abandoned coal mines in Appalachia. Accomplishing this will involve a special partnership comprised of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA); the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Surface Mining (OSM); the states of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia; local governments; and private and public groups. A major goal of the clean-up plan is to increase the exchange of information and to eliminate duplication of efforts.

The USEPA has singled out AMD as the number one water quality problem in Appalachia. In 1977, President Carter signed the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act to prevent future coal mining from creating AMD problems, and to clean up abandoned mine problems.

The greatest single source of nonpoint pollution in Pennsylvania's waters is also AMD. Approximately 2,500 miles of our waterways are degraded by AMD. It is estimated that it will take about \$15 billion to restore the water quality in these streams. However, the value of these streams, if restored, would result in a \$66 million annual recreational benefit.

The Little Toby Creek Watershed has been chosen for the OSM's Appalachian Clean Stream Initiative.



**Peter A. Colangelo**

*Executive Director*

*Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*

The purpose of the project is to improve water quality and restore or improve fisheries in the Little Toby Creek Watershed and the Clarion River. To date, over \$4.2 million has been expended by DER alone on AMD abatement in the watershed. These efforts resulted in improving the water quality of Little Toby Creek so the Commission is able to manage it as a trout-stocked fishery. The Commission annually stocks 9,000 trout in the lower reaches of Little Toby with an additional 97,000 fingerling brown trout stocked in the Clarion River at the confluence of Little Toby.

A total of \$9 million is allocated over the next three years for the AMD cleanup of the Little Toby Creek Watershed through this Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative Program. When completed, eliminating or reducing the remaining AMD in the watershed will restore or improve 11.8 miles of streams in the middle and upper watershed. It will also improve habitat quality on the lower 12.2 miles of stream to a level that supports the natural reproduction of wild trout. This could result in approximately \$800,000 of annual combined recreation and economic benefit and possibly enable a wild and scenic river designation for the Clarion River.

Yes, the future looks great for Little Toby Creek and for the anglers of Pennsylvania.

*Peter A. Colangelo*



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*The Keystone State's Official Fishing Magazine*

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*This issue's front cover was photographed by Barry and Cathy Beck.*

Read the features in this issue and you'll see a common thread in a few articles. In "Mulberry Carp," author George Dolnack was surprised that mulberries fooled carp. In "Let the Current Take Your Bait," author J. "Gus" Gistveit suggests that anglers must be ready for the unexpected. In this issue's "On the Water," a surprising realization ambushed author Robert L. Petri. And in "Shad in May: Dart or Flutterspoon?" author Dennis Scholl stresses the idea of being knowledgeable yet flexible when choosing a lure.

In each of these stories, the authors described circumstances in which they had to alter their plans, change their minds or adapt to changing fishing conditions.

Fact is, we tend to think of fishing more as a science than an art. The ability to predict and obtain repeatable results is the mark of scientific experimentation. We want these kinds of constants in our lives—sure things we can depend on, so that making decisions and living life are as simple as we can make them.

Predictable, repeatable results are surely a part of angling success. But fishing is really much more than that—if we let it be more. Beyond the basics it's more of an art than a science. It's ironic that in fishing—and in our day-to-day living—accepting unpredictability and learning how to adapt to change are the keys beyond the basics to even greater success.

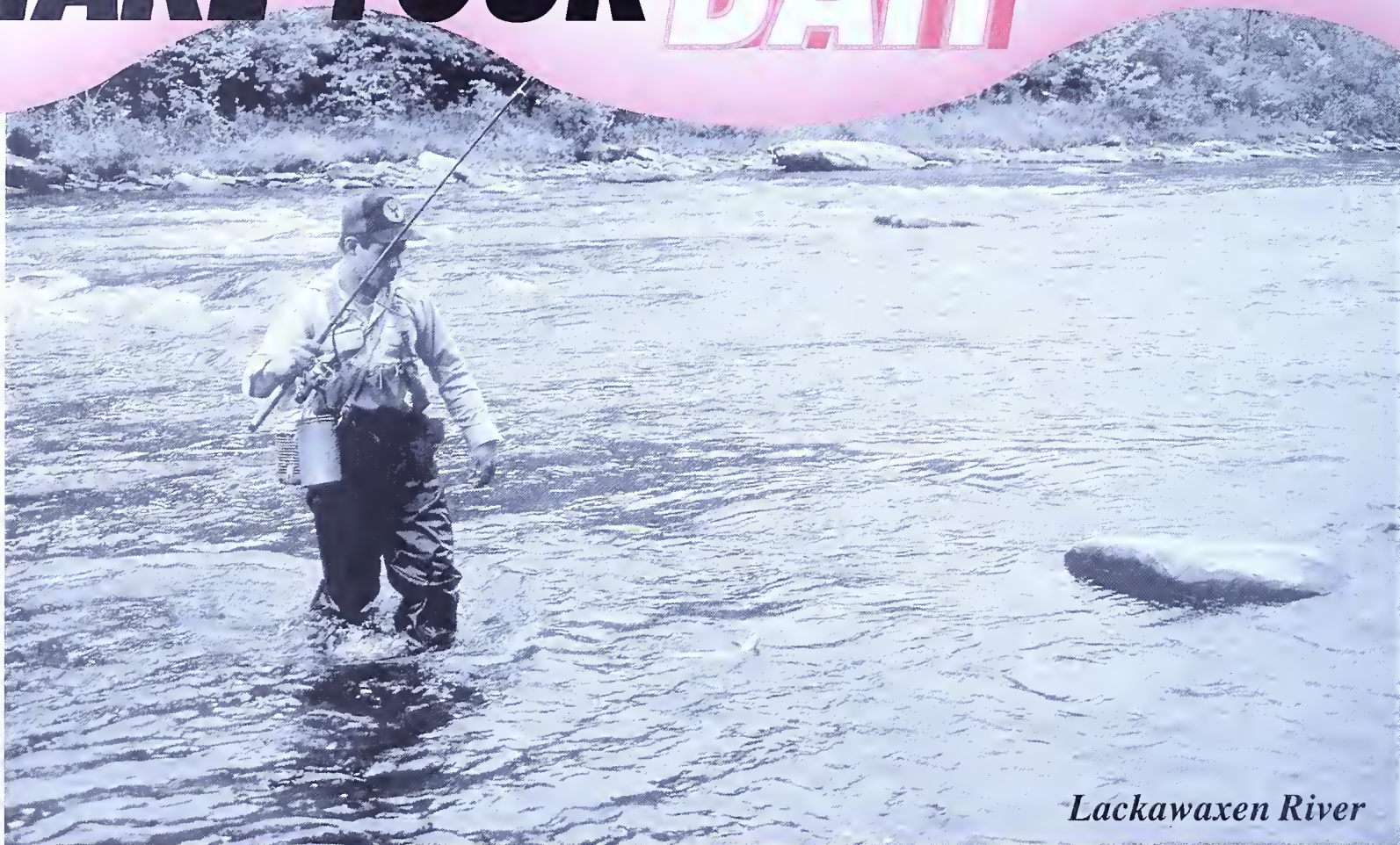
—Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.





# LET THE **CURRENT** TAKE YOUR **BAIT**

by J. "Gus" Gistveit



*Lackawaxen River*

Drifting bait in a trout stream should be like flying a kite. You're in charge, but you still go where the currents take you. This is a case in which it is what the angler does that spoils it, not what the angler doesn't do. And if the angler tries too hard not to do anything wrong, surely something will go wrong.

Drifting bait to trout is a gentle art and science that combines intensity with relaxation. The angler must always be alert for takes. The mind must be in rhythm with the stream. When you get in the right frame of mind, you are not thinking about anything else. But unlike concentrating on your taxes, it is really very soothing.

This is more a mental game than a physical one. It is learning to read the water. It is learning how to rig. It is learning how your line and terminal rig react to the water, and what to

do about different reactions. It is putting your mind at the end of the line.

Learning to read the water should begin on smaller streams where you can see exactly what is going on. One of the first things you should see is that the bigger trout are usually where you can't see them. Trout that hang out where they can be seen get eaten by kingfishers, or herons. Trout that live longer than most of their siblings lie under the cover of rocks, logs, overhanging banks or swirling water.

If trout are in a feeding mood, the cover will be adjacent to the current that carries most of the food in the stream. Instead of fighting that current, though, the trout will be behind some cover that breaks the current, or in the deep runs where the current is broken by the bottom (see Figure 1).

***Keep your rig simple—just a hook, and only when necessary, a splitshot. The important part is the unnecessary junk you avoid. Everything the trout sees other than the bait is unnatural, and might keep a trout from taking the bait.***



The trout brain, simplistic compared to the human brain, is like an amazing computer that directs the trout to consume more energy that it spends. The surplus energy is used for growth and reproduction, or it's stored as fat. Trout might fight heavy current for an extraordinary feeding opportunity. For normal feeding conditions trout cannot afford to fight heavy current while they wait.

Some anglers do not understand the connection between visible cover such as boulders or logs that break the current, and holding close to the bottom. There is a distinct connection both in cover and in current break. The cover is a combination of depth and swirling water that obliterates what would be a clear view of the bottom if the water were calm. The current break occurs along any bottom, even over gravel. Friction between water and the bottom slows the water (see Figure 1a). The width of the slower band depends on the amount of friction. A clay bottom makes a tiny band. A rubble bottom makes a wide band.

This band of relatively slowly moving water comes into play in the ways bait should be drifted. More on this later.

The most important thing to remember about this is that feeding trout will be in a position to feed. That is, they will be close to the best feeding opportunity. In streams the best opportunity is usually the current, but it might also be another place from which to ambush minnows, or a spot beneath overhanging vegetation where terrestrial insects might drop into the water.

You can learn a lot about trout habits by watching them, if you are sneaky enough. Getting in a position to watch trout going about their normal business is no easy feat. They hide if they see you. And then, if your fishing time is limited it is hard to put down the fishing rod while you watch the trout.

One of the things you will learn is that no pattern described by any outdoor writer covers all trout behavior. Life is not that simple. People like simple answers, though, and there is always someone who is willing to supply simple answers.

So why am I going to lengths to write about fish behavior and then tell you it is not necessarily true?

Because that's the way it is. Because if every trout hid under things, kingfishers would starve. Because trout do not ever consider rules of behavior.

Not long ago I read an article about fly fishing, written by a very good fisherman. I know this for fact because I have fished with him. In this article he described where trout would be during a certain insect hatch. It was wonderfully written, until he used the "a" word—"always."

*Always* is one of the most abused words in the language. It does not apply to many things, maybe not to anything. Be-

## Lackawaxen River



yond any doubt it does not apply to the places where trout wait for food.

All we can really say truthfully is to suggest places where trout will most likely be. In smaller streams we can be quite

sure where trout will not be, because we can see a good portion of the water and the hiding places. The certainty with which we can predict where trout will be diminishes as the size of the stream increases because the percentage of suitable trout habitat increases, while the portion of the water that we can verify by sight decreases. I can fish some of my favorite small, native brook trout streams from spring to mouth in a morning. Sometimes at the Lackawaxen River I might stand in the same place for hours at a time, and that is not just because there is so much water within casting distance.

In larger streams the only clues you have for reading the water are what the surface looks like, and what you feel through the line. This is not enough to eliminate any water, at least until it has already been fished. What it boils down to is that you have to fish the water more thoroughly. Everything you might have learned on smaller streams still applies, but with so much less of the water visible it becomes more of a mental game, more art than science.

The Fish and Boat Commission has found that put-and-take stocking makes more sense on smaller streams because a greater portion of the stocked trout are harvested by anglers. It is an easier game in smaller streams.

Nonetheless, I find that I get more pleasure out of drifting

## Temperature vs. Accuracy

Trout are generally more active when the water temperature is in a certain range, roughly from 50 to 65 degrees. What this means to bait-drifting for trout is that when the water temperature is in this range trout will move relatively far to take a bait. During May and June, perhaps all summer in some of our high-quality streams, a trout might dash across a pool to take a bait, and certainly a couple of feet if it is at all hungry.

But during the first few weeks of trout season, and during the extended season, you have to tickle the trout's nose with a bait. Casts and drifts have to be right on the money.—MB.



# LET THE **CURRENT** TAKE YOUR **BAIT**

bait in larger streams. Sometimes I close my eyes when I do it, and I get very relaxed. In fact, one day on Pine Creek I got so relaxed that I fell asleep while I was fishing, and I woke up just as I dropped my rod. Still half asleep, my immediate reaction was to grab for the rod, which resulted in my taking a dunking. That water was very cold.

Having some notion about where the trout will be is only part of the game. Getting the bait to them is not always such an easy thing. Now we are involved with the more difficult part of reading the water and reading the currents. Trout cover

is solid, stationary things. Current is fluid, moving, constantly changing, and we can't see most of it.

At the risk of scaring off anglers, I point out that reading currents calls for a fair knowledge of some basic physics. You need to know about gravity. That's easy enough. I am reminded of it every time I slip and slide down a steep creek bank on my rear end. You have to know about inertia—something moving will travel in a straight line until it hits something else. You must know about angles of reflection, of which another example is the way a cue ball bounces off the rails of a pool table.

This is all stuff you know, if you don't think about it.

To get a bait in front of a trout using a natural drift, the kind a trout expects, you have to be able to cast or flip the bait upstream in the current, predicting where upstream the bait will wind up close both laterally and vertically to wherever you expect a trout to be, before cross-currents spoil the drift. That is a lot.

The way water currents act can be described in the laws of physics, but because the possibilities are infinite there is no way to describe all conditions and the variables between. The only way to learn this is to practice, again starting on smaller streams where you can see everything that is going on.

Natural drifts become increasingly difficult as the size of the stream increases because so many cross-currents can act on the line (see Figure 2). While the bait might be in a current moving at 4 mph, the line might be lying across another current moving 2 mph and at an angle from the bait current. In a large stream the line might pass through 20 cross-currents. These cross-currents pull or drag the line, which moves the bait in a manner contradictory to the current it is in.

Fly fishermen deal with cross-currents by keeping some slack line on the water and by mending the line. But slack line does

not work with spinning tackle because the spin fisherman relies on feeling pick-ups through the line, whereas fly fishermen watch the line move. And you can not mend monofilament line.

The best way to get natural drifts with spinning gear is by using a long rod, which minimizes the amount of line that lies on the water (see Figure 3). My favorite rod for stream trout fishing is a 7 1/2-foot ultralight. In many smaller streams I can just dabble right under the rod tip most of the time. And on larger trout streams and rivers I hold the rod tip high to keep as much line off the water as possible.

The long rod does get in the way where there are overhanging brush or limbs, but that is an acceptable trade-off.

The other end of the rig is just as important. Keep your rig simple, just a hook, and only when necessary, a splitshot. The important part is the unnecessary junk you avoid. Everything the trout sees other than the bait is unnatural, and might keep a trout from taking the bait.

In a natural state, a bait does not come equipped with a splitshot. But neither is it connected to a long fishing line. Nor is trying to get very close to a trout. The weight that you add to the line is to compensate for these things, and mostly for the latter, which includes being able to cast the bait. (Just try to cast a wax worm without any extra weight.)

The splitshot is necessary for reaching those trout that hold in the relatively slow band of water very close to the bottom. Trout move up from this band to take bait. They might take an insect off the surface, in their optimum temperature range—not likely in cold water, though. Then you have to get the bait right down with the trout. And for those times when trout are not active, one still might take a snack if it does not take much effort.

Because of the drag on the line, there is no way to keep the bait at the pace of the slower water without weight. No matter what you do, the line and the bait are going to travel downstream at the same speed as long as they are connected. A splitshot just heavy enough to tick along the bottom slows the bait and makes an easy meal of it. Keep the shot close to the bait, though, because if the bait is still up in the swifter water while the shot is dragging along the bottom, the bait will spin erratically. It won't interest lethargic trout, and it won't look natural.

Drifting bait to trout brought down to the simplest level is just trying to make the bait appear natural. I don't claim this is always easy. You are always on the right track, though, if you keep this in mind.

*West Branch Tionesta Creek*



**Drifting bait to trout is a gentle art and science that combines intensity with relaxation. The angler must always be alert for takes. The mind must be in rhythm with the stream.**

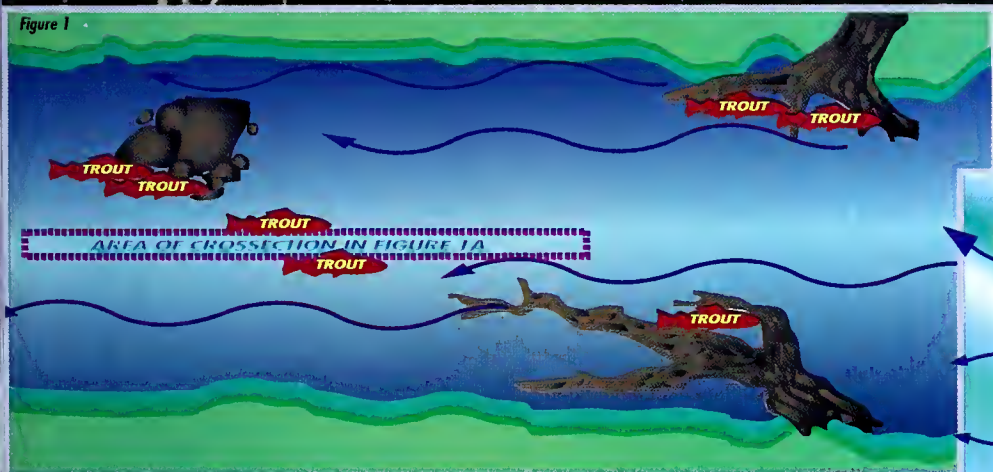
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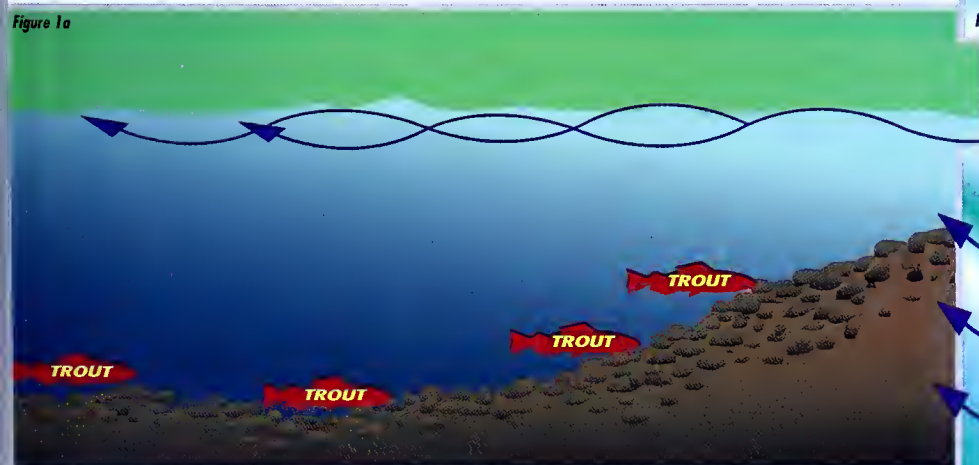
**My favorite rod for stream trout fishing is a 7 1/2-foot ultralight. In many smaller streams I can just dabble right under the rod tip most of the time. And on larger trout streams and rivers I hold the rod tip high to keep as much line off the water as possible.**



photo-J. "Gus" Gistveit, graphics-Ted Walke



Feeding trout hold in cover that breaks the current, so they can be close to the food-carrying current, but not always swimming against the full force of the current.



The bottom of deeper runs in small streams can provide both cover and current break. (Figure 1-A is a side view of the area highlighted in Figure 1.)

A shorter rod (left) leaves more line on the water than a longer rod. That's why a longer rod gives you better control and a more natural-looking bait presentation with spinning gear.

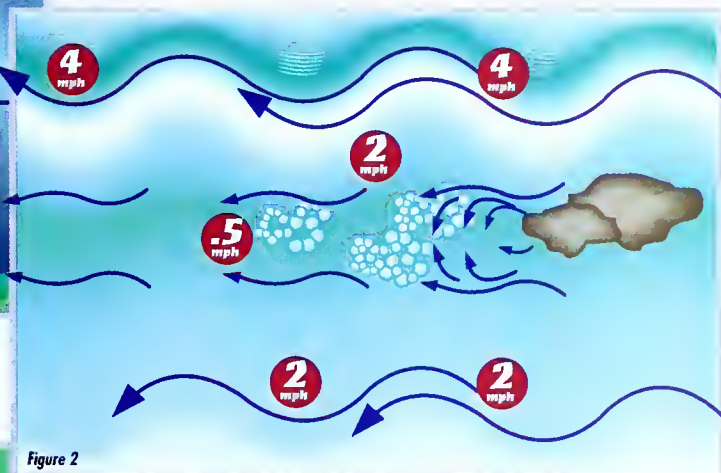


Figure 2

Stream sections have cross-currents that affect the drift of your bait.

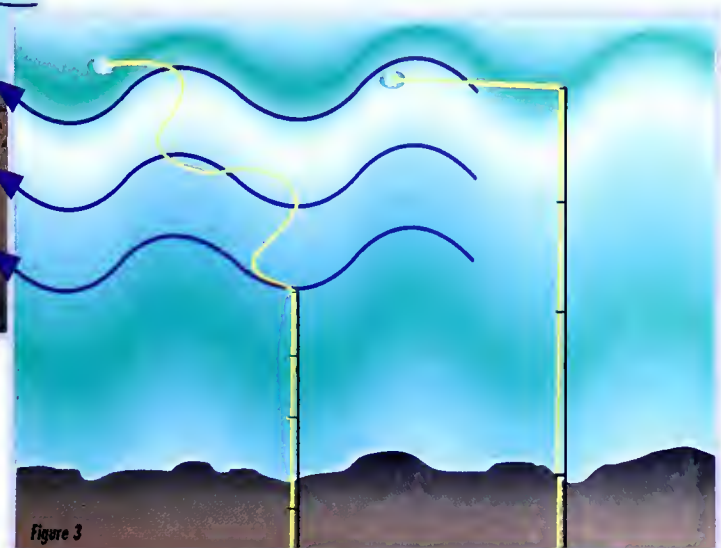


Figure 3



# *the* **Slate Drake**

## *Mayfly for All Summer*

by Charles R. Meck



*Mahogany spinner,  
or white-gloved howdy*

If you've fly fished Pennsylvania trout waters for any period, you've probably already met a slate drake hatch. If you've fished any Keystone water when this large, dark mayfly appears, you know how important this hatch can be. Many anglers who annually fly fish the slate drake hatch vividly remember the first time they met this hatch. They look forward to the slate drake in late May and early June and again in August, September and October. Anglers even find some slate drakes appearing in July—so you can see why it's a mayfly for all summer.

Craig Josephson of Johnstown first met the hatch on Fishing Creek in Clinton County one early June evening almost a decade ago. Craig matched the hatch with a size 12 dark-gray Slate Drake dry fly and immediately began catching trout. Before that first matching-the-hatch episode ended, Craig caught a half-dozen trout on the imitation. He now looks forward to the hatch every summer.

Bruce Matolyak of Lemont first fished a respectable hatch on Penns Creek where Big Poc Creek enters. He'll remember that initial hatch for a lifetime. Bob Budd of Altoona also met his first hatch of slate drakes in early June on Penns Creek. Annually Bob fishes the famous green drake hatch at that time of year. In that particular year, green drakes had not yet appeared, so Bob matched the slate drake with an *Isonychia* Nymph. That sporadic hatch of slate drakes and Bob's match with the nymph saved that annual fishing trip from one of little success to a highly respectable one.

Don Bastian of Cogan Station remembers his first encounter with this large, dark mayfly. It occurred on an early June evening on Lycoming Creek in northcentral Pennsylvania. Don's since fished many sporadic slate drake hatches on Fishing Creek in Columbia County. Even before Don had identified the hatch, he used a dark-gray comparadun and caught trout.



## Youghiogheny River near Confluence

fast water. For the second pattern I substitute dark-gray hen hackle tips for the wings and medium-gray hackle for the tail.

The spinner of the slate drake can also bring trout to the surface. When the slate drake dun emerges, it flies to a nearby tree and rests for a day or two. It then sheds its outer skin and becomes a mating adult that anglers call a spinner. Fly fishers often call the slate drake spinner a mahogany spinner or white-gloved howdy. It gets the latter name because of the cream color of the hind two pairs of legs. It gets the former name from its dark-mahogany body once it becomes a spinner. Spinners usually mate from 6:00 p.m.

All four fly fishers remember well their first encounters with the slate drake because all had successful fishing trips matching the hatch. All these Keystone anglers agree that they don't find the slate drake as explosive as the sulphur, hendrickson or green drake. But all would vehemently argue that the slate drake provides some great fly fishing over an extended part of the fishing season. Hatches of this common large mayfly (*Isonychia bicolor*) appear from late May until early July and again in September and October. The hatch in early fall often encourages lunkers to feed on the duns and nymphs just before the onset of cold weather.

Tony Kibelbek remembers the first time he fly fished when a slate drake hatch appeared on Spruce Creek in central Pennsylvania. Tony used a Slate Drake comparadun while Andre Lijoi used a Zug Bug to imitate the nymph. Tony still remembers the 15-inch brown trout he landed during that early evening activity. Both did exceptionally well during the hatch.

I first met this extremely common hatch on northcentral Pennsylvania's Loyalsock Creek near the Sullivan County line. Dick Mills of Lehman and I planned to fish one more time on this marginal trout stream in early June before the temperature in this section of the Loyalsock rose into the 70s. We arrived at the stream near 6:00 p.m. and saw a few coffin flies hovering above a riffle just upstream. The Loyalsock holds just a few of these huge mayflies in early June, but not enough to create any feeding frenzy. By 7:00 p.m. a few large, dark mayflies began emerging in the quarter-mile huge riffle in front of me. Slate drakes prefer fast water, so you'll find the majority of them emerging on rocks in water with some velocity. Soon a dozen or more trout fed on some of the drakes that rode the surface. Dick and I both tied on size 12 Slate Drakes and began casting to rising trout in the riffle. Before the hatch ended near 8:00 p.m., we had landed a dozen trout on Slate Drake patterns.

I usually tie two different Slate Drake patterns. I tie one with dark-gray deer hair wings, medium-gray deer hair for the tails, a dark-gray dubbed poly body, and legs made from a dark-brown hackle in front and a cream hackle behind. I use this in big,

to 8:30 p.m., so look for spent adults on the water at that time. After the female spinners mate, they move toward the water to lay their eggs. After the egg-laying process some females fall spent onto the surface.

Several years after I hit the great hatch of slate drakes, I met my first spinner fall on a tributary to the Loyalsock, Elk Creek, near Hillsgrove. For more than a half-hour trout fed consistently on a good supply of slate drake duns in the riffle in front of me. A few minutes later, mated female mahogany spinners fell to the surface spent. Duns that emerged from the bottom of the stream the night before now came back to the water as mated spinners and emptied their supply of eggs for the next generation.

That first encounter on Elk Creek with a white-gloved howdy spinner fall lasted for less than a half-hour. Just before dusk these huge spinners began falling on the surface and every trout in the pool seemed intent on taking every one of the spent spinners. The fall provided plenty of action on that early June evening. A size 12 White-Gloved Howdy Spinner duped many of the risers.

You won't hit a spinner fall every night—it's just an added bonus if you do. But be prepared with some size 12 and 14 spent spinner patterns. Use poly yarn to imitate the spent wings of the spinner and dark-mahogany poly dubbed as the body, and medium-brown deer hair to copy the tails of the spinner.

You'll find the slate drake not only appearing in late May and June, but also again in August, September and October. Some of the best fly fishing I've experienced has occurred during the late summer and early fall hatch of slate drakes. Don't ever overlook that fall hatch of slate drakes.

Both Bruce Matolyak and Bob Budd hit hatches of slate drakes on Penns Creek in early June. I hit one of the heaviest hatches of this mayfly in late September on the same creek. On a cool, overcast, rainy day thousands of slate drake duns attempted to emerge. When slate drakes emerge on overcast rainy days, the duns seem to emerge in the water more than they do on clear days. That cool overcast, drizzly day in late September on Penns



# the Slate Drake

Mayfly  
for  
All  
Summer

Creek provided ample evidence for that. Most duns emerged in the surface film and only a few crawled onto exposed rocks. The cool, overcast conditions prevented many of the duns from taking flight, and trout had a food bonanza with these large defenseless mayflies. Trout rose throughout the pocket water and riffles and readily took any dark-gray pattern that matched the hatch. Three of us hooked and released more than two dozen trout on that late September hatch. Trout seemed to sense that this was the last big hatch of the year and actively fed on duns on the surface. The hatch lasted most of the afternoon. Just think—four hours of uninterrupted matching-the-hatch action.

For years anglers thought four or five very close species made up the common slate drake hatches. More recently, scientists have found that one species, *Isonychia bicolor*, produces most of the major slate drake hatches on Pennsylvania trout streams. They found that this species produces two generations each year. The first, and the larger of the two, appears in late May and early June. Usually a size 12 Slate Drake pattern matches this hatch.

The second generation appears just three months later, in September and October. Anglers most often match this second generation with a size 14 pattern. The time of the day the hatch appears varies with the season. First generation duns in late May and June appear most often in the evening. Usually they appear from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Second generation hatches, in September and October, most often appear from mid-morning through late afternoon.

Slate drakes emerge in an unusual manner. You often find nymphs of the slate drake crawling out onto an exposed rock in a stream just before emergence. After the dun breaks out of its nymphal shuck it rests for a few seconds and then flies to a nearby tree and remains there until it sheds its skin once more and becomes a mating spinner. If duns hatch in this manner, crawling onto a protected rock and then emerging, few are available on the surface for trout. However, some duns do emerge on the surface instead of emerging on an exposed rock, and they do provide food for trout.

Don't overlook the importance of the nymph during the slate drake hatch. Nymphs become extremely active and move toward exposed rocks to emerge. In doing so they expose themselves to feeding trout. I found that a simple emerger pattern with three black hackle tips for a tail, a loosely dubbed body of black angora, and wing and legs of black hackle works exceptionally well. To get the proper effect for the wing pad and the legs, I start with about two dozen long black hackle barbles. Take them from the largest black hackle you have. After you've dubbed the back half of the body, tie the barbles with the butts facing forward and the hackle tips facing toward the bend of the hook. Finish dubbing the front end, or thorax, of the body with black angora. Then pull the hackle over the top of the front half of the body. Tie off the barbles, but don't cut the excess tips off—distribute half of the tips to the right

and half to the left side. These tips become the legs. This emerger pattern works exceptionally well during a hatch. I like to fish the pattern just underneath the surface, so I usually add some weight to the body before I begin tying it.

If you use the emerger by itself, move the pattern toward the surface with a twitching motion. I often tie a Slate Drake dry fly and at the bend of the hook of this pattern I add a 30-inch piece of 4X tippet. I add the emerger pattern to the tippet and cast both patterns. You'll find when you use the emerger pattern in this manner it drifts just a few inches under the surface, making it deadly and readily available to trout.

Earlier I've suggested two patterns to copy the dun. For years George Harvey has claimed that fly fishers need only a few flies to take them through much of the summer. He recommends that all anglers fishing during June, July, August and September carry plenty of gray-bodied Adams patterns in sizes 12, 14 and 16. Why does the Adams work so well during these months? I contend that the Adams works so well during the summer because it closely copies many dark-gray mayflies, and especially the slate drake.

Where will you find the slate drake? It's extremely common on northcentral Pennsylvania's freestone streams like Lycoming, Loyalsock, First Fork of the Sinnemahoning, Pine and Kettle creeks. Slate drakes also appear on some of the finer limestone

waters like Fishing and Penns creeks and the Little Juniata River in central Pennsylvania. Anglers can readily determine quickly whether a stream holds any slate drakes. If you see a good number of fairly large black nymphal shucks of recently emerged duns on exposed rocks in fast water, you know immediately that slate drake duns have recently appeared. During the height of the hatch, in early June, rocks on the First Fork of the Sinnemahoning, the Loyalsock and many other streams hold dozens of *Isonychia* nymphal shucks.

Next time you fly fish in the summer and wonder which pattern might produce—try the Adams, or better yet, the Slate Drake. Both adequately match the very common slate drake mayfly on Commonwealth waters. But don't just use the pattern in the summer—try it also in September and October. In the early fall the hatch this pattern matches makes a second appearance. This fall emergence can be one of the most productive hatches of the entire fishing season.

If you ever hit one of those cool dreary, drizzly fall days when slate drakes appear, you might be in for some exceptional action. On these days duns have difficulty taking flight and often rest on the water. Get out and enjoy the fun and match this early summer and early fall emerger with a Slate Drake pattern. Hit one or two hatches of this large, dark mayfly when trout eagerly feed on the duns and you, too, will call it a mayfly for all summer. Hit a hatch of slate drakes and match the hatch with a good imitation and you will always remember that first encounter with this great hatch.



Slate drake dun





# Mulberry

by George Dolnack

I was lazing around one hot and humid afternoon during the middle of June last year when the telephone rang. It was fellow angler and outdoorsman Tim Doutrich, who lives a couple of doors away.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Just thumbing through some magazines." I replied.

"Want to go fishing?"

"Naw. Nothing will bite in this weather."

"Good day for carp."

"Carp! Ugh! You've got to be kidding. Count me out," I said.

"You sure?" he jibed.

"Where are you going?"

"Pequea Creek, out where I used to live."

"Got any doughballs?"

"Don't need any. We'll get bait along the creek."

"Under cow plops?"

"No, from the trees."

"What trees?" I was astounded at his answer.

"The mulberry trees. We'll use mulberries for bait," he shot back.

Poor Tim, I thought. The heat must have gotten to him. It didn't sound as if he was carrying a full tackle box. The best thing to do in a case like this is to humor the afflicted.

"You feeling all right, Tim?" I asked.

"Yep, been using them since I was in grade school."

I've used a lot of things for bait in my day, but mulberries? I had to see this.

I hung up, went to the basement and dug out a well used casting outfit. After stripping off the old line, I put some fresh four-pound-test mono on the spool. Then I tied a size 8 hook to the end and pinched on a small splitshot about a foot above the hook. A plastic film container crammed with hooks and splitshot rounded out my tackle.

I stuffed one of my cameras into a tote bag. As I was digging a soda out of the fridge, I told my wife that I was going fishing with Tim.

"If you're looking for those meal worms that you had squirreled away back in the corner of the top shelf, forget about them. I pitched them a while back," she said.

"Don't need them. We're using mulberries for bait."

She rolled her eyes toward the ceiling and just shook her head. I knew that she was thinking the same thing I thought about Tim. I didn't bother to tell her that it was his idea. She wouldn't understand. So I gathered up my stuff and was out the door just as Tim pulled into the driveway.

*I baited up, cast out several times, let the berry slowly drift downstream and then made a slow retrieve. On my third try the line slowly straightened and I set the hook. The rod bent over double as I held on to a 20-inch carp.*

It was a 10-minute drive to the stretch of Pequea Creek near Paradise that we would be fishing. On the way Tim filled me in on his method of carp fishing.

He started fishing the Pequea almost 25 years ago and used worms at the beginning with moderate success. Then one day, he noticed that the carp congregated in the water beneath the overhanging mulberry trees. When the ripe berries dropped into the water, the carp gobbled them up. This led him to use the mulberries for bait.

He found that the riper berries sank faster than those that were less mature and more buoyant. Those about half ripe, or reddish, sank slower and gave the carp more time to ingest them as they sank. Since that remarkable discovery, Doutrich hits Pequea Creek around the middle of June or when the mulber-



# Mulberry Carp

rics start to ripen until they go out of season.

He uses six-pound-test line, a size 8 short-shank hook, a light-action spinning rod or a fly rod. Depending on the ripeness of the mulberry, he may not use a splitshot. When he baits the hook with the mulberry, he passes the hook completely through it until he can just feel the point penetrating the other side of the berry.

Doutrich has caught these bottom-feeders on the Pequea measuring up to 42 inches. Carp in the two-foot to three-foot range are not uncommon, he says.

He takes much the same approach to carp fishing as he does for trout, staying well back from the stream and avoids casting his shadow over the water. While fishing for carp, he looks for signs of their activity, such as bubbles and swirls in the shallows or under mulberry trees, a dorsal fin or even a pair of orangish lips opening up to suck in a mulberry.

After we arrived at the stream and crossed the barbed wire fence, he went to the first mulberry tree and stripped off a handful of berries ranging from half ripe to fully ripe and placed them in a bait container. Then he studied the water for a bit and pointed to a couple of spots where the carp were active.

The stretch of the Pequea where we were fishing is bordered by Amish farms and pastures run right up to the banks of the 20-foot-wide stream. The water was murky and the banks, which ran up to five feet high, were open in some spots and crowded

in others with weedy vegetation, and an occasional mulberry or willow tree. A few dead or uprooted trees were also in the creek.

Doutrich took a half-dozen mulberries from the container and tossed them into the water. As they slowly sank, a pair of thick lips appeared just below the murky surface and sucked in a berry.

When I saw this, he made a believer out of me.

I baited up, cast out several times, let the berry slowly drift downstream and then made a slow retrieve. On my third try the line slowly straightened and I set the hook. The rod bent over double as I held on to a 20-inch carp. My partner eased down over the bank, landed the fish, and then released it. I, too, was hooked on this brand of carp fishing.

After catching a half-dozen more carp within the next hour, we called it quits for the day. Other trips to the Pequea were just as successful, even to the point of losing some fish that must have been at least 30 inches.

We worked the stream until the end of the mulberry season.

This year we are going to try and extend our carp fishing on the Pequea by freezing the mulberries and also by using blackberries, which don't start to ripen until the end of July or the first part of August. Who knows, maybe the carp will take a liking to something different.

ANGLER



*"After catching a half-dozen carp within an hour, we called it quits for the day. Other trips were just as successful, even to the point of losing some fish that must have been at least 30 inches." This photograph shows Pequea Creek at the town of Paradise.*



# Adams Caddis

by Chauncy K. Lively  
photos by the author

Popular fly patterns tend to spawn offspring—not necessarily clones, but descendants carrying distinct family resemblances. The many members of the Coachman family of flies are perhaps the best examples. But there are others, too, like the Adams. When Leonard Halliday concocted the Adams, little did he expect that his brainchild would inspire a Blue-Wing Adams, a Female Adams, a Female Spentwing Adams and a Yellow-Bodied Adams. Now we have an Adams Caddis to add to the family tree.

Why not an Adams Caddis? Actually, it probably has more legitimacy than most offshoots. We tend to forget that dry flies specifically representing caddis flies did not enjoy widespread use until relatively recently. Before that time most anglers fished winged wet flies when caddises were showing. The standard winged wet fly, with its duck quill downwing extending over its back—as in the Leadwing Coachman, Greenwells Glory and Female Beaverkill—was considered the correct caddis look. That the trout were taking the naturals on the surface while the flies were fished submerged didn't seem to matter. Many caddis flies dive beneath the surface to lay their eggs, and the sunken fly represents this phase of the insect's life cycle. There can be no doubt that countless trout have been caught on wets during caddis hatches.

But diehard dry fly fishermen insisted there were standard floaters that would take caddis-eating trout, too. I remember when a size 16 or 18 Adams was considered the fly for the early season Grannom caddis hatch in the Cumberland Valley, and particularly on the Yellow Breeches. The little Adams apparently satisfied the trout in the matters of size, color and form, even though the pattern is a mayfly type.

But I wonder how the normal Adams would fare versus the Adams Caddis of similar size during a heavy hatch of the



Grannom, when the trout became really selective. There are far too many extraneous factors in play to make a fair assessment—at least, with laboratory accuracy—but I think I'd put my money on the Adams Caddis. Why? For one reason: The light pattern.

On these pages we have previously discussed the importance of the light pattern—the imprint a natural or artificial fly makes on the surface film. The parts of the fly touching the surface form indentations on the mirrorlike underside of the film. The arrangement of indentations is unique to each kind of insect, and those of a mayfly dun differ from those of a caddis fly, which differ from those of a floating grasshopper, and so forth.

During a heavy hatch the repetitive sameness of the insect's light pattern seems to become etched on the trout's brain, and any deviation may be regarded with suspicion. The tails of the normal Adams form a crease in the film, which is foreign to the light pattern of a caddis. In addition, the rear legs of caddis flies seem to drag along in the film, unlike the "standing on their toes" attitude of mayfly duns. The lateral hairs of the Adams Caddis wing create furrows in the film, which closely mimic the posture of the sprawling legs.

Lately I've seen the Adams Caddis appear on the shelves of fly shops in several locations, but I haven't yet learned the identity of the pattern's originator. Perhaps

it's the product of a logical evolution by more than one tier—each following his own instincts and arriving at the same result.

The only modification I've made in the dressing of the Adams Caddis is the flattening of the hair wing, as described in steps 3 and 4 of the tying instructions. This procedure also gives the wing a slightly triangular profile. The corners provide balanced support on the water. Also, the lateral hairs are now positioned to lie flat on the film like the dragging rear legs of the real caddis, in compliance with the natural's light pattern.

Deer body hair is an ideal material for caddis dry fly wings because of its superior buoyancy. It's a "user-friendly" material that adds much versatility to the Adams Caddis. Real caddis flies fuss and fidget on the water. Rarely do they float along quietly and serenely as do mayflies. In some species the females lay their eggs on the surface. Others swim or crawl beneath the surface to attach their eggs to submerged objects. Still others may "walk" cross-current over the surface. All this activity provides opportunities for the fly fisher.

Gently twitching the fly is often advantageous but it should not be overdone. A subtle twitch is sufficient to create a burst of light on the underside of the surface film. If the fly is jerked along in broad sweeps the trout are likely to be spooked.

Working a bit of dressing into the hackle and hair wing provides the pattern with a high degree of flotation and permits agitation on the surface without sinking. Trout often react explosively to the hyperactive caddis flies. It makes for exciting fishing and the Adams Caddis is ideally suited for this action. I always have to concentrate on staying calm during these times, but it isn't easy when trout are crashing the surface all around. With the adrenaline pumping in high gear, I've left my share of flies in the jaws of noisily feeding trout, and I always berate myself for acting this way. Then I pull myself together and realize, "Hey, isn't this fun?"

ANGLER



# Adams Caddis

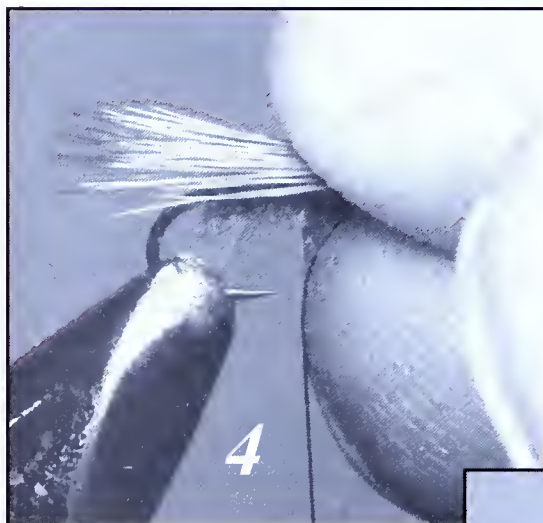
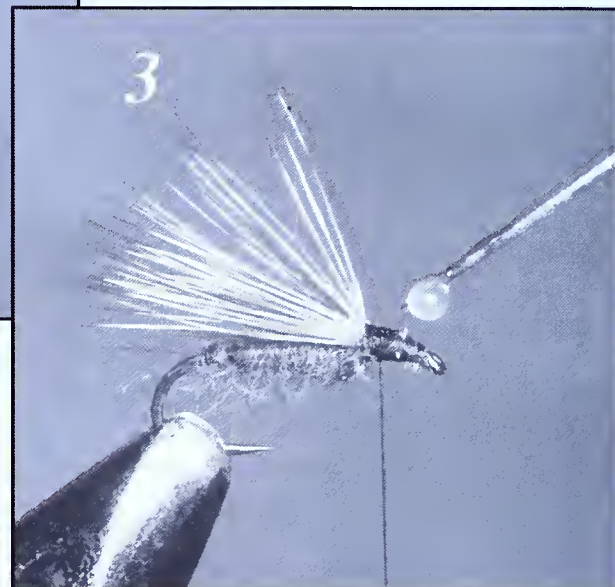


**1** Tie in the thread an eighth-inch behind the eye and wind it back to the bend. Apply tacky wax to about two inches of the thread next to the hook. Apply muskrat fur dubbing to the thread.



**2** Wind the dubbing forward to form a tapered body and tie off about one-fourth of the shank length behind the eye.

**3** Cut a small bunch of deer body hair and even the tips. Position the hair over the body with the tips overhanging the bend by about a shank length, and tie in the butts at the fore end of the body. Apply a drop of Flexament to the wing windings and another to the hair at the base of the wing.

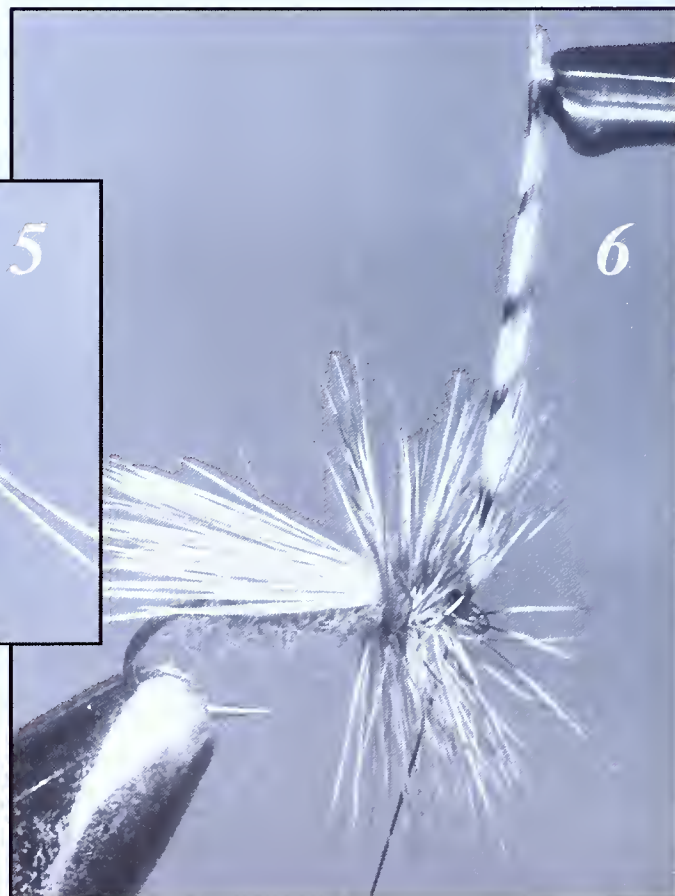


**4** When the cement at the wing base has begun to set, pinch the base to flatten the hair and cause it to fan out.

**5** Select a brown and a grizzly hackle, each with barbs as long as one to 1 1/2 times the hook's gape. Strip off the webby barbs from the base of each and tie them in together at the base of the wing, at a right angle to the shank, on edge and with the dull sides facing the eye. Bend the butts of the stems forward and tie them off. Trim the excess stems.



**6** Clamp your hackle plier to the tip of the rear hackle and wind it over the wing windings. Tie off, allowing space for the head behind the eye. Trim the excess hackle tip. Then wind the second hackle through the winds of the first, tie off and trim the excess. Whip-finish the head and lacquer the windings.



## Dressing: Adams Caddis

**Hook:** Sizes 12 to 18, regular shank, fine wire.

**Thread:** Black 6/0 prewaxed.

**Body:** Muskrat fur dubbing.

**Wing:** Natural deer body hair.

**Hackle:** One each, brown and grizzly.



# On the Water

with Robert L. Petri

## The Schedule

For years, I approached my fishing with the same rigidity a railroad man approaches his timetable. I planned every angling weekend and re-planned well in advance. With a carload of maps, hats, boots and rods, I would hurtle through the pre-dawn darkness each Saturday with my stream itinerary in one hand and the steering wheel in the other. So much water to fish, and so little time. That's the way it is when you have a day job cutting into your angling time. I would arrive at the appointed destination at the appointed time, fish the appointed section of water, and leave in accordance with the dictates of the schedule.

How else would I get everywhere that I wanted to go, before duty and the obligations of the workaday world forced me back home? Keeping to the schedule was everything.

Even for obsessives like me, there comes occasional windows of insight and opportunities for redemption—chances to save myself from myself. Mine came on a beautiful May evening on one of my favorite small Cameron County freestone trout waters.

Clouds of sulfur duns silhouetted against a waning sun were my companions as I worked my way up the little meadow stream. Rising trout showed in almost every decent run and pool, and I was doing all right. Oh, I wasn't catching any truly big fish—I seldom do. I learned to live with this fact long ago. I was more than satisfied with the spritely little wild brookies and browns that I was regularly bringing to hand. The fishing was good, and I was on schedule.

An all but abandoned railroad line ran parallel to the stream at the top of the high bank to my right. Out of the corner of my eye, I caught a flash of motion and turned to find a teenage girl slowly strolling her way upstream along the line. She wore a bright-red high school letter jacket to ward off the slight evening chill. We exchanged waves, and she continued along the upstream path. I mumbled to myself about the effects of her presence and her red jacket on the spooky trout in the pools I had yet to fish. The schedule required me to get to the big pool by the leaning willow in time for the spinner fall. Then and there I would really hammer them. My pool, my stream, my schedule. The girl had better not cause me to deviate. I returned my attention to the task at hand.

Twilight had all but captured the entire valley by the time I reached the big pool by the leaning willow. There I found that I had company of precisely the type I did not want. The girl sat on a streamside log, head cupped in her hands, eyes fixed on the water in fascination. Up and down the length of the pool swam two of the largest beavers I had ever seen. They were nervous at being observed, but they also knew that their hour was at hand as the darkness deepened. Back and forth they cruised, now diving, now coming topside again. There was elegance, power and grace in their every motion.

From an angling standpoint, the pool was ruined, the schedule blown. My first reaction was a mixture of disgust and mild



anger. But as the beavers traveled the length of the pool again and again, slapping their tails and making powerful mid-stream hairpin turns, my mood began to change. I could not deny their beauty, nor could I deny in the failing light who the stream really belonged to. The pool could have been boiling with three-pound brown trout sipping sulfur spinners, but I probably would not have noticed. I was enthralled by the simple beauty of the scene I had chanced upon.

I struck up a conversation with the girl. She told me she came here to the pool almost every evening at twilight to watch the beavers. To her, there simply was nothing finer in nature, and she loved them. We watched until almost all the light had faded from the sky. Then she said her goodbyes and made her way back down the path toward her home a few hundred yards away.

As I began the long walk back to my car, the feeling of disgust rose again in me. However, this time it had nothing to do with the girl or the beaver. It was the schedule. I had let it take me prisoner, and it had made me miss so much of what was really important.

That night, I set up my tent at a nearby state park, and put some hot dogs on the propane stove. While they cooked, I removed my wristwatch and buried it out of sight in the back of the glove compartment. I took tomorrow's schedule, ripped it into a dozen pieces and gave it gladly to the campfire. I sat back and savored a new sense of peace and purpose. Tomorrow I would do much more than just fish. I would also for the first time in a long while take the time to see.

Starlight twinkled through the rear window of the tent as I crawled into my sleeping bag. A gentle breeze carried the scent of pine down the valley. On a nearby ridge, an owl sang his mournful tune. Anticipation of the new day to come would make it hard to sleep this night.





# FLAC on the Juniata

by Mike Bleech



The guy who gave us directions to the Fish and Boat Commission launch ramp said live bait was best—stonecats, crayfish and hellgrammites. “You get mostly small bass on hellgrammites,” he said.

He also warned that we might need a four-wheel-drive vehicle to get out of the launch ramp. We should have heeded that advice. A torn sign on a tree near the dirt ramp said something about “temporary.” I knew when I began backing down the steep part of the ramp that the brown van would not get back out without some help.

Fortunately, Tom Ehrhart was fishing nearby. “You’re lucky because I ran out of gas and had to stop to refuel,” Tom said.

Indeed, we were lucky that fine morning. Tom had launched at another ramp a mile or so downriver and then motored toward a riffle just upriver from where Greg and I were stuck. But his gas tank ran dry when he was right in front of us. The time it took him to pour gas from his spare tank into his small outboard motor, the kind with a built-in tank, delayed him long enough to witness our predicament. Greg and I were lucky that Tom is the kind of guy who lends a helping hand.



**If you cover a lot of water on the Juniata River you will pass over some excellent smallmouth bass, walleye and musky water. You could also put together a nice catch of panfish.**

photo-Darl Black



My brother Greg boated Tom downriver to his 4x4 pick-up. Tom returned and pulled the van out of the river. I left the van at the other ramp Tom had used, and we still had a fine day of fishing.

"I'll have one of those," Tom said about Greg's jet drive outboard. The Juniata, like most Pennsylvania rivers and creeks, is a series of pools separated by shallow riffles. Running propeller-driven boat motors on the pools can be hard enough on props, but getting through the riffles is all but impossible during normal river flow. The jet drive, on the other hand, can power you just about anywhere in the Juniata. Since their introduction there is no longer any



need to shuttle float trips between two vehicles, parking one at each end of the float.

Tom, who lives in Cresson, said this is not his favorite stretch of the Juniata River for smallmouth bass fishing because the bass are not as big as they are farther downriver. "Mostly 10 to 14 inches," he said. "I'm just killing time."

Fishing was, I gather, just an excuse to be there.

"It's pretty down here," Tom said when I pressed him for the real reason.

That was the same reason why Greg and I chose to fish just upriver from Newton Hamilton. The main highway in the area, U.S. Route 22, pulls away from the river from Mt. Union to McVeytown. The narrow blacktops that meander with the river hardly interrupt the serenity.

Wisps of fog still hung over the river when Greg and I began fishing a few hundred yards upriver from the steep Fish and Boat Commission gravel ramp. A few smallmouths nipped at the rear treble hooks of our minnow lures. One better-than-average walleye came out of slightly deeper water that swirled around boulders. The hook clung to the fish just long enough for me to get a look at it.

Our tactics were simple. The water was quite shallow, no deeper than six feet for the first couple of miles of our journey, so we used shallow-running minnow lures. Keeping the rod tip high in the shallowest water, pausing the retrieve to let the lure float past boulders—floating minnow lures are perfect for



this situation—that is, if the fish are aggressive.

Everything lost interest in our minnow lures after a short while, as the sunshine hit the water more directly. There was not a cloud in the rich, blue sky. We could see bass, hundreds of them, in the clear, shallow water with the aid of fishing glasses. Not until we arrived below Beacon

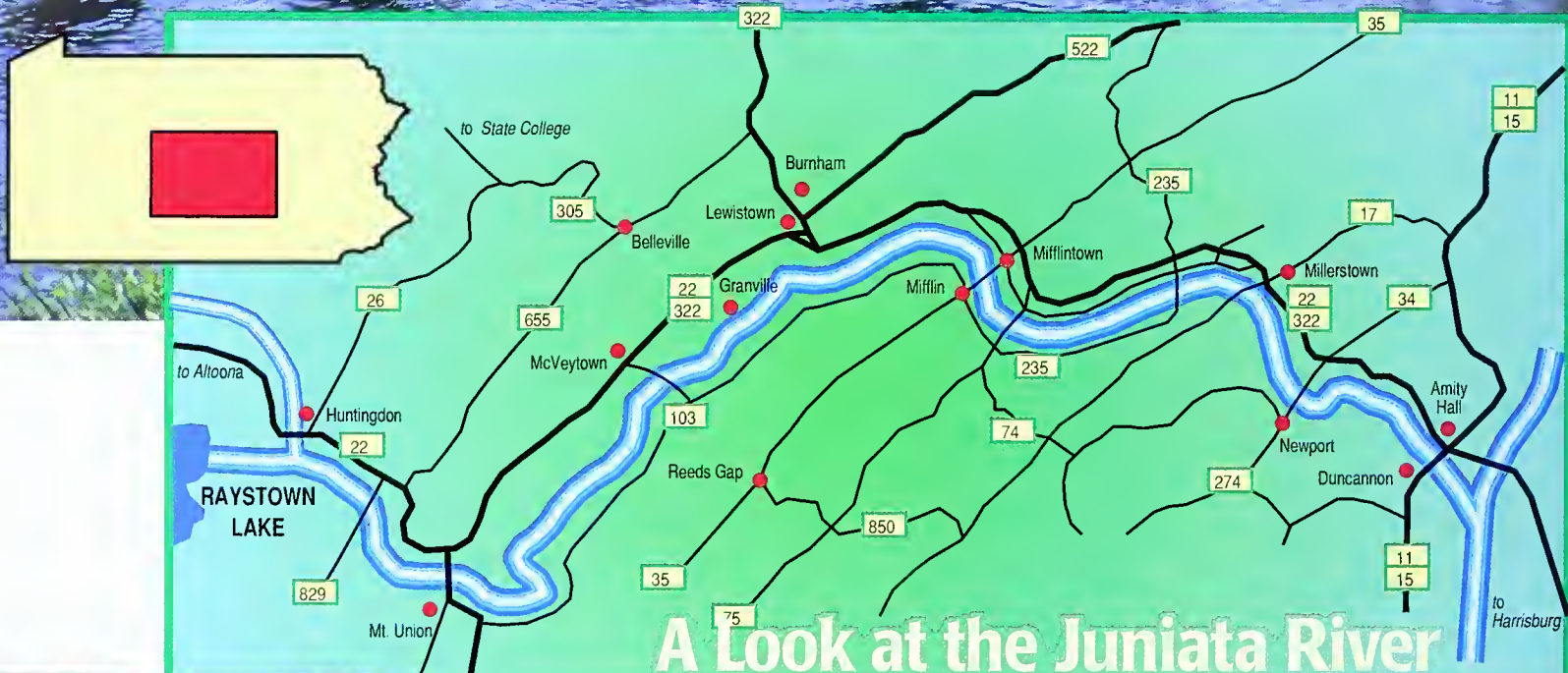
## JETLAC on the Juniata

Lodge, where the van was parked, did we find water deep enough to hide the bottom.

There walleye anglers have placed a crude ladder to help scale the steep bank during winter, when walleye fishing heats up.

In a deep riffle below the old dam at the bottom of the Beacon Lodge pool we finally became more serious about catch-

**While fishing the Juniata I want to keep three outfits rigged—one with a large floating-minnow lure for muskies, one with a smaller floating-minnow lure for bass and walleyes, and a third for live bait or a jig.**



### A Look at the Juniata River

The Juniata River begins at the confluence of the Little Juniata River and the Raystown Branch, at the village of Ardenheim, Huntingdon County. It flows about 90 miles eastward, emptying into the Susquehanna River at Clarks Ferry.

The Juniata can be floated in a canoe or light boat. There are no large rapids during normal summer flow. Numerous access areas make floats of various lengths possible. Several Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission accesses are located along the river.

U.S. Route 22 follows the entire length of the Juniata along the northern side. Several less traveled roads parallel the southern

side. Shore access is very good, although most of the surrounding land is private. It can be waded in sneakers and shorts, but be alert for sudden dropoffs and slippery rocks.

From Clarks Ferry upriver to Lewistown you can hear the traffic on routes 22 and 322, but it is quieter upriver. Everywhere the mountain scenery is splendid.

For local information on the river and surrounding area, contact: Huntingdon County Tourist Promotion Agency, 241 Mifflin Street, Huntingdon, PA 16652; phone 814-643-3577. There are varied services and accommodations in the area including motels, campgrounds and restaurants.—MB.



Photo-Darl Black

Photo-Mike Bleech; map graphics-Ted Walker



ing fish. Maybe it took that long for it to sink in that the bass were no longer interested in the minnow lures.

Just being there was entertaining enough. The dam washed out in 1936, leaving three channels. The main river channel flows between a brushy island, which is actually part of the dam, and the south shore (which on the grand scale is actually the north side of the meandering river). This small island is separated from the rest of the dam remains by a narrow channel. Another channel separates the dam from the other bank.

The deep riffle, which is the main channel, arcs against the bank, wrapping around and dropping into deeper water on the outside. It looked so good, we felt there was no need to go farther. All of the necessary elements for catching fish at midday seemed to be there—swirling water and enough depth to hide fish, a mixed bottom that went from rocky rubble to sand, cover, and shade from tall trees. There we would either fail or succeed.

At that point we readily agreed with the gentleman who had given us directions to the launch ramp. We would be better off using live bait. But since we had none, we tried the closest thing we had—natural-colored jigs on light leadheads.

Medium, translucent-brown with dark flecks, the first natural jig body I tried was a good guess, as was the 1/8-ounce leadhead. We cast them into the current and let the current drift the lures, using our rod tips to keep the jigs from hanging on the rocky bottom. It was intense, finesse fishing. The jigs had to be very close to the bottom, which meant keeping the line tight, raising or lowering the rod tip, swinging the rod right or left so the jigs “swam” close to the bottom as some hapless river creature caught in the current might move.

Finesse fishing is much more difficult in a river than in a lake because of the current. You must be able to visualize the effects of currents, depth and line bow on the jig, and translate the ticks you feel through the line and rod. Instead of being a problem, though, it makes for very satisfying fishing.

Once we found what the smallmouths wanted they were surprisingly aggressive. They smacked the lure, then rocketed skyward. What great sport they were on our light tackle.

## Other fishing tactics

If you cover a lot of water on the Juniata River you will pass over some excellent smallmouth bass, walleye and musky water. You could also put together a nice catch of panfish. But because these different sport fish have different habits, and because one species often hits while the others don't, versatility is important to fishing success.

Instead of carrying a huge assortment of tackle, I prefer to keep things as simple as possible. After all, in a day of fishing you have enough time only to give a few tactics a fair workout. Otherwise you pass a lot of good water and waste time while you are re-rigging.

While fishing the Juniata I want to keep three outfits rigged—one with a large floating-minnow lure for muskies, one with a smaller floating-minnow lure for bass and walleyes, and a third for live bait or a jig. If I were to eliminate one, it would be the musky outfit, because the smaller minnow lure is probably adequate for muskies. Often the smaller minnow lure would be replaced with a crankbait that dives somewhat deeper.

Below Mifflintown I would be inclined to use a deeper diving minnow lure, and to keep that musky lure handy.

Bait fishing slows you down if you are float fishing, but it is probably the more effective approach if the fish are not aggressive. If you are shore fishing, what's the hurry, anyway?

Some Juniata River regulars, especially those who have been around a while, will tell you that stonecats are the best small-mouth bait. This little catfish stays lively on the hook, and it's naturally available in the river. Other excellent bass baits are hellgrammites, crayfish and minnows, maybe in that order. For walleyes try minnows or nightcrawlers, and for muskies stick with large, lively minnows, chubs or suckers.

The best bait fishing approach for bass and walleyes is drift-fishing, in my opinion. Use enough weight to keep the bait close to the bottom, but not enough to anchor it there.

## Walleye, musky strategy

For walleyes during winter, which is the best time for walleye fishing, use live minnows or screw-tail jigs in the deeper, slower-moving pools. Even though most of the productive walleye water is in the lower half of the river, there is some fine winter walleye fishing in the two major branches, in the Raystown Branch between the dam and the mouth, and in the Little Juniata, right at Huntingdon.

Though not native to this watershed, enough muskies are stocked to provide good fishing, mostly in the lower half of the river. Probably the most effective method is float fishing with smaller jerk baits. Shore fishing with large chubs or suckers is also productive once you locate good musky water.

The Juniata bottom generally varies between rock and gravel, and bedrock protrusions. In some stretches it is so snaggy that bottom bouncing is futile. You lose an intolerable number of rigs. There you might try a slip bobber rig.

Another solution to the snag problem while fishing during summer in water no more than about four feet deep is weightless drifting—that is, using no sinker. It works only during summer because fish seldom go far for bait in cold water. Casting is difficult, and it feels unusual until you get the hang of it, but combined with low-visibility line it is a great technique for larger fish.

Juniata water is usually very clear during low-flow periods, a situation which usually points to low-visibility line. I suggest a good quality six-pound-test line when you are concentrating on bass or walleyes.

## Big Bass Program regulations

Area Fisheries Manager Larry Jackson confirmed the increase in the average fish size as you move downriver.

“Typically as you move from Huntingdon down you are looking at a lot of bass eight, nine inches to 12 inches,” he says. “Most of your bigger bass—15 to 18 inches—are downstream from Mifflintown, where the river is larger and fish can survive to an older age.”

Accordingly, the Fish and Boat Commission is taking advantage of the potential for larger smallmouth bass in the lower section of the Juniata River by placing the 18.5-mile stretch in Juniata and Perry counties from the State Route 75 bridge at Port Royal downriver to the State Route 34 bridge at Newport in the Big Bass Program. As such, the bass season is from January 1 to April 15, and from June 17 to December 31. An angler may keep four bass per day. Each must be at least 15 inches long.

Results of this program at other waterways gives good reason to hope that smallmouth bass fishing in the lower Juniata will get even better. See pages 39-40 of the 1995 *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws* for more information on the Commission's Big Bass Program.





# Fishing the **Clarion River**

by Robert L. Petri

**W**herever devotees of Pennsylvania's flowing-water smallmouth bass gather to compare notes, you hear the roll call of the rivers. Many anglers favor the gentle runs of the Allegheny. Some like the broad flats of the Delaware, the nutrient-rich waters of the Juniata and its branches, and the wide, rock-strewn expanses of the Susquehanna. Regional favorites like the Lehigh, the Schuylkill, the Youghiogheny and a host of other smaller waterways are also home streams for many anglers. Our state is richly blessed with productive waterways for the bass angler to explore, and each has its fiercely devoted group of true believers.

Lately, the name of a river that had long been missing from the list of favorites is on the lips of more and more dedicated Keystone State smallmouth anglers, and rightfully so. After a long history of degradation by mine acid drainage and industrial effluents, the beautiful Clarion River, in Elk, Jefferson, Forest and Clarion counties, has returned from the near-dead to become one of Pennsylvania's finest flowing-water smallmouth destinations.

It has been a long road back for the Clarion. As recently as the mid-1970s, there were nearly 500 identified point sources of mine acid pollution in the 1,252-square-mile Clarion watershed. A major paper mill at Johnsonburg released its effluent indirectly into the river by way of leakage from a huge waste lagoon. The river smelled like a wet paper bag for miles downstream. The largest single Clarion tributary in the upper half of the watershed, Little Toby Creek, carried a continual slug of deadly acid down its narrow, forested valley and delivered it to the river at the small village of Portland Mills, in the upper watershed.

However, the 1970s were also the decade when the Clarion was born again. A major effort by citizens groups, industry

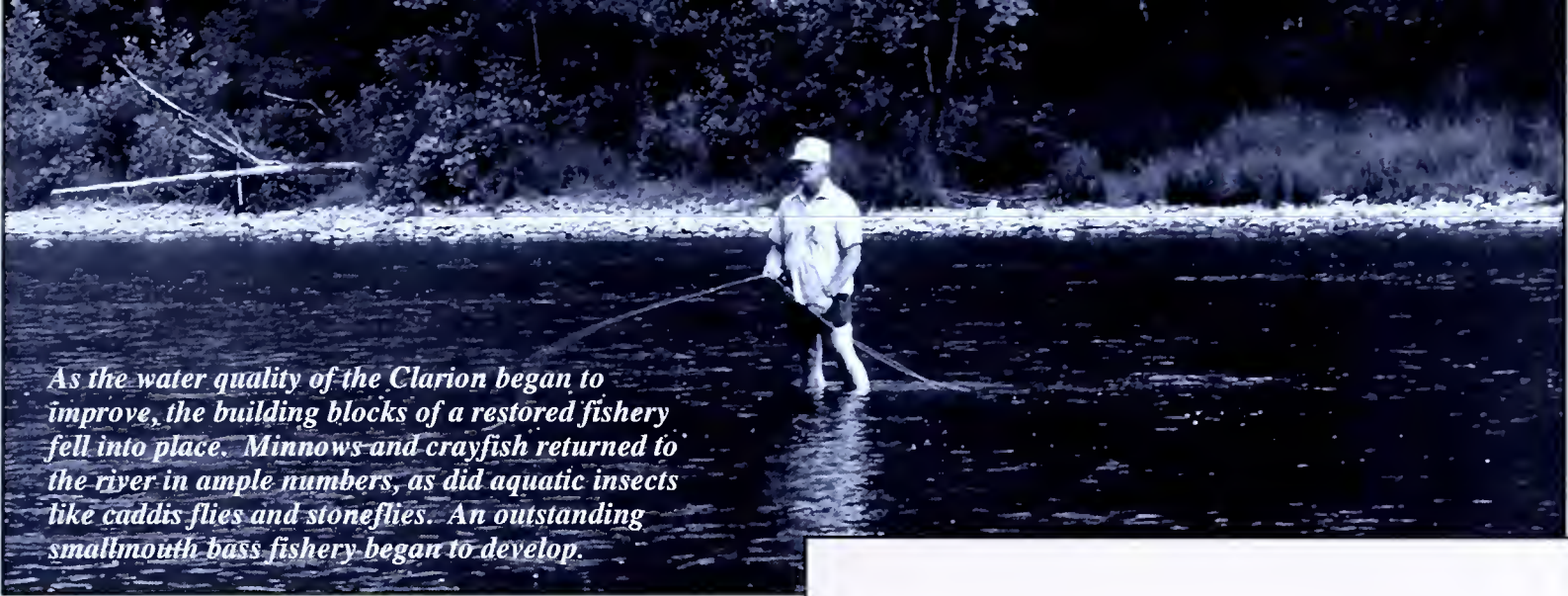
*Today, 60-plus miles of the Clarion from Ridgway to the backwaters of Piney Dam near the city of Clarion offer some of western Pennsylvania's best scenery and fishing.*



and government combined to start the river back on the road to recovery. The mill at Johnsonburg came gradually into compliance. Congress acted in 1976 to authorize mine acid abatement projects in the Clarion watershed. The tireless volunteers of the Toby Creek Watershed Association worked to eliminate much of the discharge of mine acid into Little Toby Creek. They succeeded to the point where today, the lower 12.2 miles of Little Toby are a stocked trout fishery.

As the water quality of the Clarion began to improve, the building blocks of a restored fishery began to fall into place. Minnows and crayfish returned to the river in ample numbers, as did aquatic insects like caddis flies and stoneflies. An outstanding smallmouth bass fishery began to develop. Today, 60-plus miles of the Clarion from Ridgway to the backwaters of Piney Dam near





*As the water quality of the Clarion began to improve, the building blocks of a restored fishery fell into place. Minnows and crayfish returned to the river in ample numbers, as did aquatic insects like caddis flies and stoneflies. An outstanding smallmouth bass fishery began to develop.*

photo-Robert L. Petit

the city of Clarion offer some of western Pennsylvania's best scenery and fishing.

### East, West branches

The east and west branches of the Clarion rise in the high country of westcentral Pennsylvania's Allegheny Plateau, and then flow southward to join and form the main stem at Johnsonburg. Both branches provide reasonably good trout angling throughout the season. The West Branch is stocked over a 10-mile section from Johnsonburg upstream. There is a delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only area near Wilcox, just below the West Branch's junction with Wilson Run. Access to the West Branch fishery is via U.S. Route 219, which parallels the stream north of Johnsonburg.

The East Branch hosts a 1,370-acre impoundment, East Branch Lake, in its middle reaches. Intensive mine acid abatement programs on the lake's tributary streams have allowed an excellent stillwater fishery for bass, muskies and trout to develop here. Additionally, the bottom release from East Branch Lake provides a constant supply of cold water that has turned the 10 miles of the East Branch from the dam to Johnsonburg into a four-season trout fishery supported by annual Fish & Boat Commission plants of both adult and fingerling brook and brown trout. Bendigo State Park sits at about the midpoint of the stocked portion of the East Branch, and offers numerous access points.

### Main stem

The main stem of the Clarion is born with the junction of the two branches at Johnsonburg. This section of the river is home to fair numbers of smallmouth bass and a scattering of trout. The fishing here is worthwhile, but is only really a prelude to the truly fine water farther downstream. From Johnsonburg downstream eight miles to Ridgway, the Clarion is paralleled by U.S. Route 219, and access is fairly good.

It is generally agreed that the best that the Clarion has to offer begins shortly after the river swings past the city of Ridgway. Over the next 44 miles of river, from Ridgway to Cooksburg, the Fish & Boat Commission conducts an annual plant of over 100,000 brown trout fingerlings. These stockings have resulted in numerous reports of brown trout in excess of 20 inches taken from this section of the Clarion. Also in this portion of the river an excellent smallmouth bass fishery begins.

From Ridgway downriver to the tiny village of Portland Mills, the Clarion is a close traveling partner with PA Route 949, and access is good. Angling for bass and trout is better here than in the section between Johnsonburg and Ridgway, and improves even more as you continue downriver.

## Living in Harmony

When the Clarion began its recovery in the 1970s, anglers were not the only ones to take advantage of the newly restored river. The Clarion became a very popular destination for canoeists and others looking to spend a bright summer day drifting the river. With several commercial liveries operating seven days a week during the summer, the river can become a pretty busy place, especially in the Cooks Forest section. If you are fishing and are distracted by all this activity, there are several things you can do.

First, don't get all bent out of shape at the canoeists. They love the river just as you do, only for a different reason. Fish early and late in the day. Canoe traffic is much lighter then. During holiday weekends, avoid the Cooks Forest section, especially during midday. If you can find a way to get on the river during the week, all the better. The heaviest use is on weekends. Above all, remember that the Clarion is fairly big water. Even though a string of canoes may disturb your solitude, it probably won't hurt your fishing success. If you are courteous, you will find that most people on the river will respond in kind.—RLP.

At Portland Mills, with the addition of Little Toby Creek, the Clarion becomes a wide and strong mountain river sweeping south and west through the densely forested highlands of Elk County. A magnificent eight-mile section of river virtually untouched by civilization begins at Portland Mills, as the river swings past high rocky banks and dense stands of rhododendron and pine. Only a single old iron bridge at the cluster of hunting camps known as Arroyo intrudes on the solitude of this section of the Clarion.

Civilization returns to the banks of the Clarion in a minor way as the river travels past the small village of Hallton near the Elk County line. Over the remaining 35-mile journey to Cooksburg, one or the other of the river banks is paralleled by a dirt or single lane blacktop road. However, in most cases, these roads do not detract from the scenery or the fishing, and they offer numerous points of access for the wading or float-fishing angler.

After swinging past the villages of Hallton, Belltown and Clarington, the river enters the confines of Cooks Forest State Park. Here, a seven-mile section of blacktop road runs tight against the north bank of the river, and provides numerous pulloffs and other points of access all the way to the Route 36 bridge at Cooksburg. Even though this section is perhaps the busiest



# Fishing the Clarion River

on the entire river, it is also indicative of the generally excellent access to be found all along the Portland Mills to Cooksburg stretch of the Clarion.

Considerable portions of both banks of the river are part of the public trust. The river serves as the southern boundary for much of the Allegheny National Forest. State game lands occupy a good portion of

the south bank. Clear Creek and Cooks Forest state parks both have considerable river frontage. All together, this high level of public ownership adds up to make the Clarion one of Pennsylvania's most accessible rivers.

In the 22 miles of river from the Route 36 bridge at Cooksburg to the Mill Creek boat launch at Piney Dam, the Clarion returns to the wilderness ways it displays in the section immediately below Portland Mills. The bass fishing here is perhaps the best in the entire watershed. Only a single bridge at Gravel Lick, a few miles below Cooksburg, spans this entire reach of river. Otherwise, the only access is via canoe or by way of one of several extremely rough dirt roads that leave the Scotch Hill Road (SR1005) and dead end near the Clarion's north bank. These roads are four-wheel-drive territory, especially during wet periods.

The Clarion continues for another 40 miles beyond Piney Dam before committing its flow to the Allegheny near Parker, but it is the river of the 1950s that flows between these ridges instead of the relatively clean Clarion of the Ridgway to Mill Creek section. According to Tionesta-based Fish & Boat Commission Area 2 Fisheries Technician Alan Woomer, Toby Creek, Deer Creek and Cherry Run continue to foul the lower Clarion with substantial amounts of acid mine drainage, severely depressing all aquatic life in the river. Perhaps the next generation will be able to use and appreciate a Clarion River that is alive and well over its entire 150-mile length.

## Bass strategies

Even though the Clarion is a large waterway, averaging over 200 feet wide in many sections, the excellent numbers of smallmouth bass present make finding fish relatively easy. Like all stream-dwelling fish, river smallmouth bass tend to lie in places that provide the best combination of access to food and cover from predators. In the Clarion, this means around in-stream boulders and in the heads of the pools. The Clarion is loaded with huge boulders that break the flow and provide resting places for the bass. These areas should receive the majority of your angling attention, especially when they are in sections of the river with a moderate flow rate and intermediate depths in the two- to four-foot range.

As June comes to a close, the river becomes progressively warmer in the summer sun. During hot spells and at midday, the bass move up into the broken-water sections of the river where there is a better supply of oxygen. At these times, a technique I call "pocket hopping" can be very productive. Choose a section of river that is running at a fairly good clip and averages at least two or three feet deep. Look for larger rocks and other obstructions that create bathtub-sized pockets in the flow. Work these places thoroughly with your bait or lure, and you'll find bass.

Smallmouth bass are among the meanest and most aggressive of our native gamefish, but they evidently enjoy company, at least that of their own kind. Don't be surprised if you take several bass from some of the better pockets.

## Scenic Designation

After being initially rejected when a 1971 study found the river's water quality lacking because of acid mine drainage, the Clarion has once again been proposed for inclusion in the Federal Wild & Scenic Rivers System. Among the keys to a successful designation will be the results of a proposed mine acid abatement project in the upper portions of the Little Toby Creek watershed. Under the auspices of the Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative administered by the federal Office of Surface Mining, Little Toby has been designated as Pennsylvania's number one priority in the program. The cost of cleaning up the remaining four major sources of mine acid in the watershed is estimated at approximately \$12 million. Should the project receive full funding and be completed, the Clarion may finally qualify for the Scenic Rivers designation it so deserves.—RLP.

The Clarion can become quite low and clear during extended dry periods. These conditions call for a little extra caution in your approach to the river, to avoid spooking the bass. Conversely, hitting the river after a moderate rain has discolored the water just enough to take the sparkle out of it can lead to a day of bass fishing you will remember forever. The bass tend to lose a little of their inherent caution under these conditions, and the fishing can be easy.

The entire section of the river from Portland Mills to Mill Creek is a "hotspot" for smallmouths, and it is difficult to choose any one section as the best. I have had my best fishing on foot in the Cooks Forest section of the river, and below the bridge at Gravel Lick. However, I have also had very good fishing from a canoe in the sections near Hallton and Belletown on the upper river. As long as you follow some of the basic rules outlined above concerning the types of cover and flow rates that bass prefer, I think it's safe to say that there are no "bad" sections of the Clarion between Portland Mills and Mill Creek to sample for bass.

***All together, this high level of public ownership adds up to make the Clarion one of Pennsylvania's most accessible rivers.***

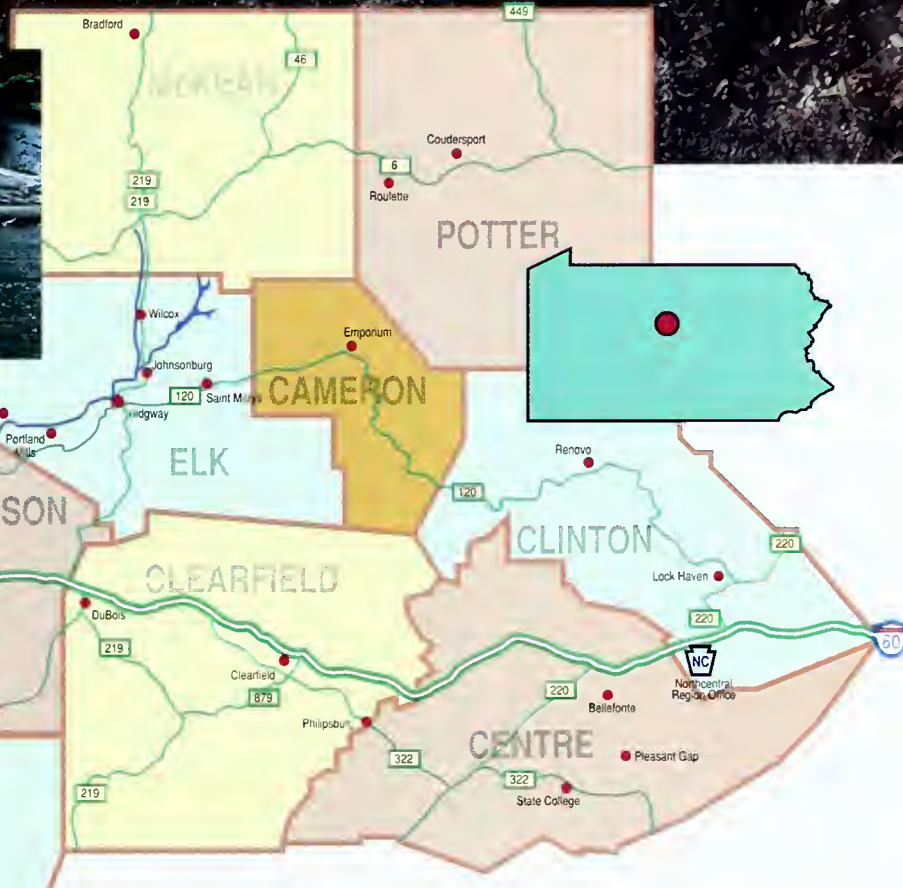
## Baits, lures

Clarion smallmouth bass respond well to the same lures and baits that attract their kind wherever they are found in the flowing waters of the Commonwealth. Live crayfish, minnows and nightcrawlers all produce well when drifted on a tight line through the numerous Clarion rock gardens. Using a larger bait hook, say a size 2, keeps more sub-legal bass from swallowing the hook, and allows you to release them unharmed.



*After a long history of degradation by mine acid drainage and industrial effluents, the beautiful Clarion River, in Elk, Jefferson, Forest and Clarion counties, has returned from the near-dead to become one of Pennsylvania's finest flowing-water smallmouth destinations.*

Photo: Robert L. Felt; map: Stephen Felt & Frank



Spinners in size 1 or larger are a good bet for the angler working with artificials. So are surface lures like the Tiny Torpedo, Crazy Crawler and small Jitter-bugs. A particular favorite of mine is the old Heddon Lucky 13. The smaller sizes in these lures produce the most fish. Other worthwhile lures include the smaller sizes of Rat-L-Traps, Rapalas and any crankbait that imitates a crayfish.

Fly anglers also take their share of Clarion River bass on small surface poppers and deerhair bugs. A steady, fairly noisy retrieve past in-stream boulders and through small pockets of slack water works best. Large nymphs like the Montana, Bitch Creek and others are productive when dead-drifted through likely holding water on a tight line. Zonkers and Woolly Buggers in darker shades of olive, black or brown also work well when fished in the same manner. Sizes 4 through 10 work best. Be sure you are getting your fly down near the bottom, where the bass are. Use a small splitshot or two in the faster runs and pools.

Smallmouth bass are the big stars of the Clarion fishery, but don't forget that the Fish & Boat Commission's trout program

adds an additional dimension to the fishery. Trout are fairly well distributed throughout the river from April to early June, but the warmer weather of summer sends them looking for cooler waters. On the Clarion, this usually means around the mouths of such river tributaries as Bear Creek near Portland Mills, Spring Creek near Hallton and Cathers Run below Cooksburg. According to Area 2 Fisheries Manager Ron Lee, the hot days of summer can produce unbelievable concentrations of large trout around the mouths of the Clarion's coldwater tribs. The vast majority of these fish are browns, but an occasional brook or rainbow trout is not unusual.

Once you find the trout, they can often be taken on the same subsurface lures and baits that are so effective on the river's bass. Some anglers fly fish for Clarion River trout, but strong insect hatches and surface-feeding trout are not the norm here. You will likely have your best luck with the long rod using a selection of medium-sized nymphs and streamers.

Beautiful Pennsylvania mountain scenery and a tumbling river full of feisty bass and trout produce an unbeatable combination on the Clarion. This river belongs on the list of our state's best smallmouth rivers, and you belong on this river. Try it and see for yourself.





# SMART

## Angler's Notebook

by Carl Richardson

### Mayflies

Mayflies are important food items for many fish, especially trout. There are more than 700 kinds of mayflies in North America. Pennsylvania is home to some 300 different species. Mayflies go through a change called metamorphosis. Unlike butterflies that have four stages (egg, larva, pupa, adult), mayflies go through three stages. This is incomplete metamorphosis. Use the letters ENA to remember each step: Egg, nymph and adult.

#### EGG

The period at the end of this sentence is larger than the eggs of most mayflies. Most eggs have hair-like projections that make them stick to the bottom. Eggs hatch after a month, but some types of mayfly eggs take as long as three months to hatch. From the egg, a nymph emerges.

#### NYPH

The nymphs of some mayflies burrow into the bottom. Others swim about freely, cling on rocks or crawl around on the bottom. Some are predators; others eat live or decaying plants. As they eat and grow, nymphs shed their skins. One mayfly sheds some 45 times. Most mayflies live in streams and some rivers, but there are a few that live in lakes and ponds.

Nearly all Pennsylvania mayflies live as nymphs for one year. At the end of this stage the mature nymph changes into an adult. This happens at the same time every year for each species when water temperature and day length are just right.

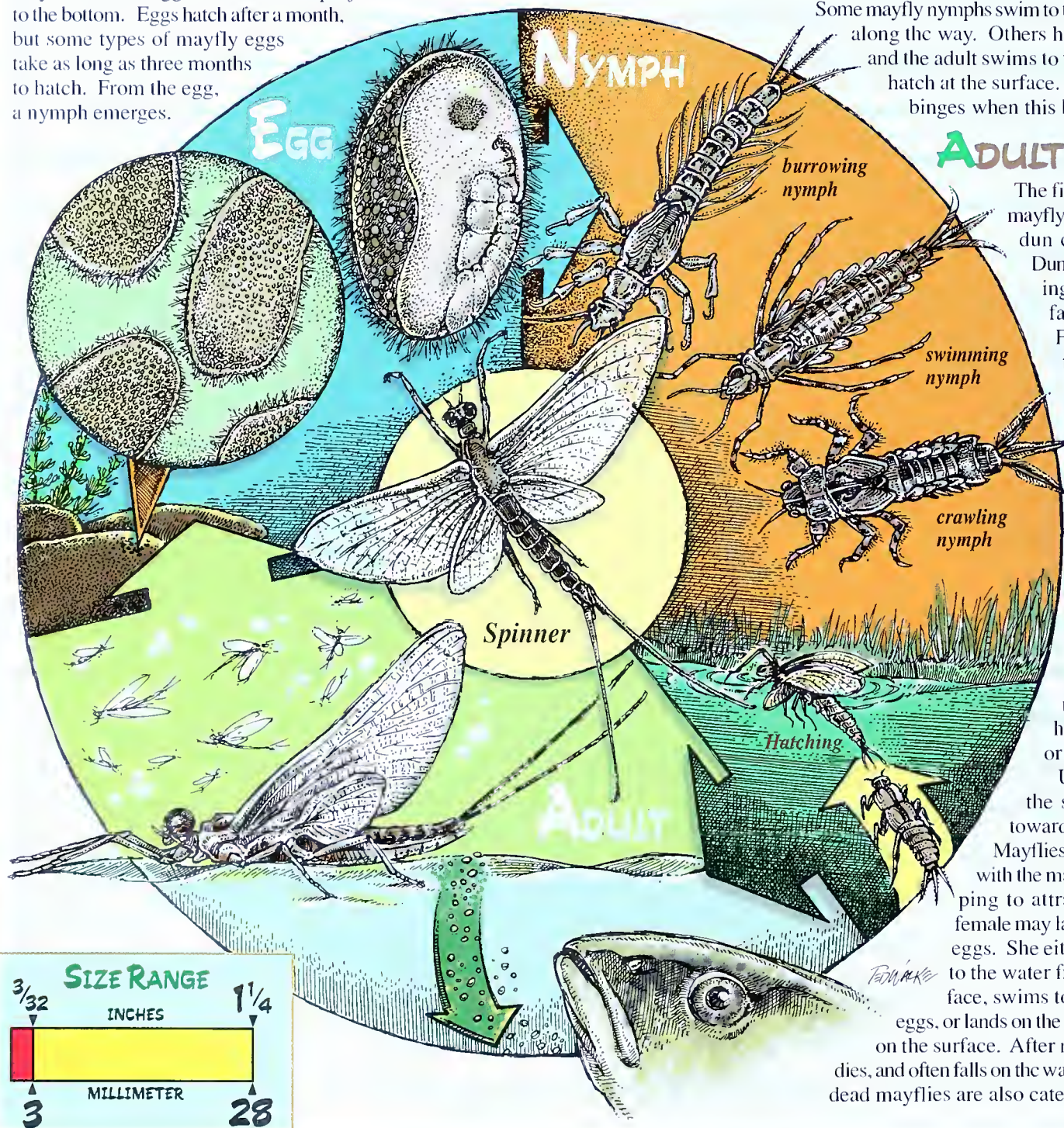
**The hatch:** When nymphs shed their skins and become adults.

Some mayfly nymphs swim to the surface, hatching along the way. Others hatch on the bottom and the adult swims to the surface, or they hatch at the surface. Fish go on feeding binges when this happens.

#### ADULT

The first stage in an adult mayfly is called a dun. The dun cannot reproduce. Duns that survive hatching and reach the surface aren't safe, yet. Fish often feast on the duns as they rest on the surface. Bats, birds and other insects eat them as they fly away from the water. The duns fly to streamside trees and brush. Most Pennsylvania mayflies change again into a reproducing stage called a spinner. This usually happens within a day or so of hatching.

Usually at nightfall, the spinner flies back toward the water to mate. Mayflies mate in big clouds, with the males diving and dipping to attract a mate. Each female may lay as many as 1,200 eggs. She either drops her eggs to the water from above the surface, swims to the bottom to lay eggs, or lands on the water and lays eggs on the surface. After mating, the mayfly dies, and often falls on the water's surface. These dead mayflies are also eaten by fish.



Tom Weller

ANGLER



# SHAD IN MAY:

# Dart or Flutterspoon?

by Dennis Scholl

**S**had fishing along the Delaware River is undergoing a revolution. Shad darts aren't the only lures in town anymore. Finding fish by reading the water is becoming a lost art. Why, even splitshot and barrel sinkers are being replaced by humongous lead cousins attached to heavy wire cables.

These days the Delaware shad scene is full of downriggers and flutterpoons and fishfinders that beep and blip and do everything but serve coffee. The result: A new breed of shad fishermen, many of whom are outperforming their predecessors after only a season or two on the river.

Consider the case of George Magaro of Bethlehem. Even though Magaro has been shad fishing for more than 15 years, he didn't know how fast and furious the sport could be until he began using a depthfinder, downriggers and flutterpoons a few years ago. Now Magaro can turn on and tune in his depthfinder and digitally pinpoint his quarry within a few inches. Then he can use his downrigger to lower his flutterpoons right in front of their noses. Last season Magaro boated 433 shad, more than most people land in a lifetime.

Similar stories can be cited up and down the river. What once was a tough nut to crack is now becoming a fairly cut-and-dry sport fishery. If you have the resources to equip a boat with an electronic fish finder and one or two downriggers, you will catch shad, a lot of them, as a matter of fact.

But is that all there is to it? Yes and no. Yes, if the Delaware is clear and calm every time you fish. Then you can just motor onto the river, locate the right spot with your fishfinder (more on that later), drop anchor and place the lures in front of the shad. The rest is up to them.

But what if Mother Nature has rendered the river nearly unfishable.



What then? You certainly can't rely on a fishfinder. What do you do? Well, as the song goes, you start at the very beginning—it's a very good place to start.

Because no matter what kind of gizmos you own, they won't be worth a plug nickel if you don't have some basic knowledge about the fish and the river they inhabit. You'll catch shad when everyone else is catching them, but you'll be wringing your hands when Ma Nature throws you a curveball.

So let's start at the very beginning, and learn a bit about this silver torpedo known as the American shad.

## Fresh from the sea

Ounce for ounce, the American shad is perhaps the strongest fish on the East Coast. An ocean dweller most of its life and built with an unbelievably intricate bone structure, the shad spends three to five years at sea after being born in freshwater, gaining strength from a rich diet of plankton and krill and tremendous endurance from season after season of long-distance swimming. Their bodies are designed for speed.

Delaware River shad may swim 12,000 to 15,000 miles in the Atlantic Ocean before maturing and entering freshwater to spawn. When they leave Delaware Bay in late March and April, they are robust and ready to tackle a river that offers a myriad of uncertainties. They are as worthy an adversary as ever swam.

But until 1960 when shad began reappearing in the Delaware after a long absence, many fishermen didn't even know such a creature existed. The runs increased during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s to a point where the Delaware now harbors a popu-





lation of somewhere between 750,000 and one million fish. More than 65,000 shad fishermen search for them each spring. The shad's enormous strength is even more appealing because the fish loves to strike lures. But the lure must be presented properly, and therein lies the mystery to the sport. What defines proper presentation in shad fishing, and how is it accomplished?

The answer begins with the fish, which carries its trait as a deep ocean dweller to its life in freshwater. When shad enter rivers to spawn, they seek the deepest portion of the river—the channel—and then follow the current upstream. If you remember those two aspects wherever you go, you'll have half the battle won. Finding the channel, though, is sometimes easier said than done, especially if you're new to river fishing, and for that matter, to stream fishing in general. You must be prepared to go through a process of trial and error.

### Finding and fishing the channel

Locating shad paths is best done when the river is at normal or low levels. But in recent years the Delaware has been far from normal when shad enter the river. We've had torrential March and April rains, and heavy snowmelt. Sometimes we've had both. But if you're able to find a window of opportunity when the river is clear and pristine and reeks of fish, by all means get out and enjoy it. And put your observation glasses on.

First observe the flow. Watch how the water swirls; take notice of the shoreline and whether it drops off sharply, and keep an eye on rapids and try to determine in which portion of them the water is deepest. Experience is the teacher, and it's gained only through your eyes or those of a mentor. Books and magazine articles can provide tips, but you have to get onto the river and observe it yourself. Don't expect to be able to read the Delaware and its currents well enough to catch fish every time until you have about three to five years of experience under your belt.

If you simply can't catch on to this game, then do the next best thing and join the crowd. That's the smartest bet, because if there's a bunch of shad fishermen congregated in one small stretch of stream, you know they must be frequenting a place where shad are caught. So don't be shy. You won't be the first

or the last newcomer the oldtimers will see. Besides, they were rookies at one time, too.

Watch the people who are catching fish. Keep an eye on how far and where they cast, how they retrieve their lines, whether they jig their lures or backreel a bit to drop the lure deeper into the current. If you're in a boat, remember where the successful fishermen are anchored, record your observations on paper, making maps with landmarks, if necessary. Remember if the river flow is high or normal or low, because if it's different the next time you return, chances are the fish will be in a slightly different location. Those are the kinds of subtleties involved in the sport.

Also remember that shad need direction to continue their upstream journey, so don't spend time fishing slack or slow water. You'll score where the water has movement. Shore fishermen do best where the channel cuts in toward the shoreline, and there are many places like these along the river. Most of these spots have groupies, but there are plenty of others you can claim for yourself if you take time to walk or drive along the river. The best time to do that is at periods of low flow, when river structure is most apparent to the naked eye.

If you can't take time to explore, consider purchasing a set of river maps from the Delaware River Basin Commission (P.O. Box 7360, West Trenton, NJ 08628), which breaks the river into 20-mile segments and indicates channel location and depth, severity of rapids, launch sites, roads, parks and other features. The maps are an excellent tool and should be in the tackle box or wading vest of every shad fisherman. If you can't get the DRBC maps, take an automobile map and blow up sections on a copy machine. Then take a drive and keep your eyes

peeled for locations where the channel is obvious. Mark your map and go back during shad season. Chances are the shad will be there, too.

Boat fishermen have a distinct advantage, especially with the sophisticated electronic equipment available these days. Fishfinders used to provide just the depth of water. Now they give you everything from water temperature and speed of the current (two effective tools for the shad fisherman) to alarms that sound when





fish pass beneath your boat. Some even can be programmed to show only fish of a specific size.

If you're a novice, consider purchasing one of these devices. And even if you're a veteran, you'll find them useful because they help uncover new spots you may have missed.

The original purpose of fishfinders—getting the depth of water—is still the most important. Remember: Find the deepest portion of the river and you'll find shad.

What do you do when you've located the channel? Two things: Drop anchor and figure out how to hook up with your quarry. The first is easy, or it could be a problem if your anchor is inadequate and supply of rope insufficient. Every good boat fisherman should have at least 75 feet of nylon rope and a Navy-type anchor (two claws on a swivel stem) of 15 to 20 pounds. You should be able to anchor anywhere with that combination.

How do you catch the shad? A separate story could be written on that subject, but basically it's a matter of getting your lure to the proper depth. Shad run deepest when the water is coldest, in late March and right through most of April. Their progress is temperature-driven, too. When the water temperature is below 46 degrees, their metabolism is slow and they are sluggish, traveling only a few miles a day, sometimes less. When the water warms past 48 degrees, they are much more vigorous and strike lures more readily, and they might cover 8 to 10 miles of river. Once the temperature reaches 54 degrees and above, the shad are traveling at full tilt and also swim off the bottom more than they did in colder days.

So you must adapt the presentation of your lure to the demands of the river. When it's cold, start fishing about two feet off the bottom. You can determine your depth by dropping your lure to the bottom and then reeling up what you feel is a foot or two. Of course you get to the bottom by adding lead weights. If you're flatlining, attach either splitshot or barrel sinkers to your line, about three or four feet above the lure.

As you may surmise, there is no reason to cast for shad when you are fishing from a boat. Just let line out the stern and into the current, and then experiment with the level at which you present the lure. That's flatlining! The shad will do the rest. Hook-ups come in the form of a quick jerk, so have your rod in a holder if you're not holding it yourself. And don't set the hook; the fish do that, too.

One way to avoid the guesswork of where to position your lure is to purchase a downrigger, a device that allows you to lower or elevate your lure to any depth you desire. Downriggers are increasingly used in tandem with depthfinders. First you check the finder to see what level the fish are inhabiting. Then you lower your lure to them. That's pretty easy, and pretty darn effective, too. Some fishermen who caught shad for years without downriggers now swear by them, pointing to a much higher number of hook-ups per trip as reason enough for never going back to traditional flatlining.

Whatever method you use, though, the intent is the same: Find the level where the fish are running.

## **Fishing in troubled waters**

It's a foregone conclusion that some portion of the shad season is going to be dominated by high water. Such was the case for the first five weeks of the 1994 season. It caused a lot of frustration and lost fishing time.

Most fishermen shy away from the Delaware when it becomes swollen from a hard, continuous rain. And that's the intelligent thing to do. There will be safer days to fish. But word

started getting out a few years ago that the shad's migration habits alter right along with water conditions. Some smart guys discovered that the fish move out of the main current and hug the shoreline when the river is high and turbid. Others discovered that when the Delaware is murky from heavy rains, shad can be caught at the mouths of clearer tributaries pouring into the big river. Of course, salmon fishermen have known this for a long time, but no one ever stopped to think that shad, just like their anadromous counterparts, act the same way.

Fishing in high water means staying out of the main current. The fish don't tackle the fastest water, so don't you, either. Concentrate your efforts near the shoreline. Shore fishermen are in their heyday when the Delaware is up, as long as they aren't impaired by trees that are half-covered by the river. Usually a short cast (20 to 25 feet) is all that's needed to reach the fish, sometimes less. And because the current is moving along faster in high water, you have an opportunity to leave your lure in the water for a longer period. The current holds it off the bottom as it completes its downstream arc. Let your lure hang in the current for a time, jigging it occasionally to spark some interest from passing fish. And if you happen to locate a spot with a small backeddy jutting into the shore, you may have discovered shad nirvana. The fish may be resting in that little pocket before attacking the heavy current again. Other spots where fish rest in high water are behind boulders, islands and bridge abutments. If you think like a fish, you'll catch more of them.

Boat fishermen (and shore fishermen, too) should approach high water with extreme caution. PFDs are in order for everyone, even if you're fishing from shore. Tragedies occur every year because some people don't respect the power of the river.

First and foremost, boaters entering an engorged Delaware River should stay near the shore. After all, that's where the fish are, so what's the sense of motoring around in dangerous currents. Anchor near the shoreline, just far enough out so that your boat floats parallel to the flow of the current. If it swings around in a backeddy, re-anchor and try again.

Once you've anchored, choose your method of fishing (flatlining, short casts or downrigging) and be ready for a strike and a whale of a fight. Every shad you hook will head directly into the main current. So be ready and have a full spool of line and a drag that's set not too tight and not too loose. High-water shad fishing is a challenge and a pleasure if you play your cards right.

## **When you're left low and dry**

Just as you'd guess, low-water shad fishing is the opposite of high-water fishing in almost every respect. Instead of being close to the shore, the fish are now in the main channel, which in most instances is somewhere near the middle of the river. And yes, if you're a shore fisherman, the fish are tough to reach, unless you know of one of those special spots where the channel gets up close and personal. Sometimes the only way to reach fish from shore is to cast with a noodle rod, an extremely long (9 to 11 1/2 feet) ultralight rod that can cast a shad dart a country mile.

Low water is better for boat fishing, but even that is limited by the type and size of boat you own. The best craft for low-water fishing is a jet boat, which can go anywhere. But most budgets can't handle that sort of expense, so the most practical choice is a 12- to 14-foot semi-V aluminum rowboat equipped with a 6 hp to 10 hp motor. The boat should have little draft and the motor should have a rock deflector attached to save shear pins, props and lower units.



## ***Dart fishermen will always be legion, simply because darts work. They have been effective for decades and will continue to be.***

The channel is usually very easy to find in low water, but there's also another factor to keep in mind. As the river flow decreases, water temperature increases, and that means the oxygen content will be a bit lower. Shad seek areas where oxygen levels are highest, and that's usually in rapids and other quick-moving stretches. Concentrate your efforts there, especially early in the morning and late in the day. At this time of the season, shad are usually spawning, and that means they're saving their energy during the day in anticipation of nighttime activity. You should follow suit: Gear your fishing trips for late afternoon to dusk, and again from daybreak to 8:30 or 9 a.m. That's when your chances are best.

### **Dart or flutterspoon?**

One of the biggest, if not the biggest, changes on the river has been the advent of the flutterspoon. It hasn't replaced the traditional shad dart, but it's certainly established itself as a strong contender. Used years ago on the Connecticut River in conjunction with colored beads, the flutterspoon has caught on in a big way along the Delaware. George Magaro, the Bethlehem fishermen who caught 433 shad in 1994, nabbed only eight of them on darts. Just a few years ago he didn't even own a flutterspoon.

The flutterspoon is nothing more than a willow leaf blade soldered to a gold-plated long-shank hook. The blades are either painted or left silver or gold. A very light lure, the flutterspoon must be weighted down or attached to a downrigger to be effective. It's also a finicky lure if not made and presented properly. To work right, a flutterspoon must, well, flutter, or wobble, in the water. If the willow leaf blade is not soldered to the hook shank properly, the lure will turn in circles and make one twisted mess of your line.

The best way to fish a flutterspoon is to attach it to a 3- or 4-foot leader, which is tied to a barrel swivel. The swivel takes twist out of the line and allows the lure to be alluring. Fish it as you want, by flatlining or downrigging—the effect is the same.

The rap on flutterspoons is that they are so light that shad often inhale them when they strike. The result is bleeding and dead fish. Some fishermen have tried to improve the situation by using short-shank hooks instead of long-shank hooks. Most fishermen say, however, that they don't have problems in the first place, that the stories passed around are merely jealousy on the part of traditional dart fishermen. Try them and make your own assumptions.

Dart fishermen will always be legion, simply because darts work. They have been effective for decades and will continue to be. Darts are made of lead poured onto gold-plated hooks, and come in a variety of sizes, shapes and colors and can be used in high or low water. They are made with and without tails and some are even gold-plated. The best bet is to have a tackle box that contains darts and flutterspoons, and then experiment until you discover which works best under different conditions. If you're a boat fisherman and use two rods, you can rig one with a dart and the other with a flutterspoon.

### **Where to go**

Only a major flood will alter the Delaware's channels, so don't expect hotspots to change from year to year. Fishermen are fortunate to have good access to the river from Trenton, NJ to Hancock, NY. The National Park Service has made great improvements to the boat access sites at Smithfield Beach in Monroe County and the Milford site in Pike County. More parking is available and the launches have been widened to accommodate at least two boats at a time. New Jersey has added sites in recent years at Kingwood, just south of Frenchtown in Hunterdon County, and in Belvidere, just across from Riverton, PA, in Northampton County. Both launches access large pools that harbor excellent fishing.

There are many other sites that continue to provide good fishing, including Yardley and Tinicum Park in Bucks County, Easton and Sandt's Eddy in Northampton County, and the Bushkill access in Monroe County. North of that are other excellent boat launches at Dingman's Ferry, Lackawaxen, Narrowsburg, Ball's Eddy, Damascus, Calicoon, Equinunk and Buckingham. These upriver sites come into their own in mid-May and produce good fishing into July.

When you plan a trip, remember that the peak of the shad migration passes through lower Bucks County in mid-April to late April, at Easton during the last week of April and first week of May, at the Delaware Water Gap and Smithfield Beach in early May and at Lackawaxen around the second week of May. These times are fairly standard from year to year but can change depending on river conditions.

In 1994, no one knew what was going on because the river was so high most of the season. By the time it subsided, the shad were virtually everywhere and were already spawning. This year we may have an early season because of the lack of snow, which means the Delaware will warm earlier than normal. There's a good chance the whole situation might be moved up by a week.

### **Is the revolution permanent?**

There is no reason to believe that the current shad fishing revolution on the Delaware will go up in smoke. But as you surmised, the change is only in equipment and technique, and it's not a change that everyone needs to follow to be successful. Old methods still work and will work as long as shad use the Delaware. And as it's been noted, the revolutionaries using the depthfinders and downriggers and flutterspoons still need to understand the fish and the river. Yes, on a clear day when the river is flowing as pleasantly as you've ever dreamed, you can click on that digital finder of fish and plot their course to a centimeter. And you can pick that pretty little flutterspoon out of your tackle box and smile the smile of a Cheshire cat as you attach it to your line and lower it by steel wire cable to exactly where you're supposed to.

But can you make the fish bite? Well, if that were the case, the sport would be called catching. And the last time anyone checked, fishing was still called fishing. So don't buy into the revolution totally until you complete your investigation of the parties involved: The American shad and the Delaware River. After you do that, go ahead and amend the constitution as much as you want.



*Dennis Scholl is president of the Delaware River Shad Fishermen's Association.*



## 1995 Leaser Lake Status Report

Leaser Lake, Lehigh County, will open to fishing on the first day of bass season—June 17, 1995. The following is a summary of the 1994 fish population survey conducted by the Commission.

- The largemouth bass population present was extremely dense. Unfortunately, most bass captured were less than 12 inches. Two bass collected were trophies (19 inches, 4.6 pounds and 21 inches, 6.3 pounds). Anglers targeting bass should experience high catch rates in 1995, but legal-size (15 inches) fish will be uncommon.

- No smallmouth bass were observed during electrofishing. It is probable that most or all of the fingerlings stocked did not survive, possibly because of predation by largemouth bass.

- Walleyes were absent from both trap net and electrofishing catches, even though fingerlings were stocked from 1992 through 1994. Predation by largemouth bass was most likely the primary reason for the failure in establishing a walleye population.

- Although no chain pickerel were stocked by the Commission since Leaser's drawdown, two adult fish were captured.

- Relatively low numbers of yellow perch were captured by trap nets. The catch rate of desirable-size perch (equal to or greater than 10 inches) was above

average in comparison to other southeast Pennsylvania lakes. Most perch captured ranged from 9 to 11.5 inches, with fish up to 13 inches present.

- The bluegill and pumpkinseed populations were exceptional regarding both the numbers and sizes of fish caught. Bluegills and pumpkinseeds collected averaged 7 to 8.5 inches, with individuals up to 10 inches present.

- The crappie population density was poor, although the few individuals captured were of quality size (equal to or greater than 9 inches). Fingerling stockings and natural reproduction by the stocked adults have most likely failed to produce a desirable population because of the previously mentioned problem of predation by largemouth bass.

- A fair number of channel catfish and brown bullheads was present. At their present density, these species could provide a moderately desirable fishery. Channel catfish were typically less than 18 inches in length. Brown bullheads measured 10 to 13.9 inches.

- Shiners, minnows, and killifish provided abundant forage.

- When Leaser Lake is opened for fishing, Conservation Lakes regulations will be in effect. Please refer to your 1995 *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws* for an overview of these regulations.

## Boating Fatalities Hit Record Low

The number of recreational boating fatalities in the United States declined to a record low of 800 in 1993. However, according to the U.S. Coast Guard, the reported number of accidents increased.

The latest report shows that the number of deaths continued to decrease nationwide in 1993 and the fatality rate fell to 3.9 deaths per 100,000 recreational boats. Although these numbers are promising, there were 6,335 reported accidents involving 8,688 vessels, nearly 300 more than in 1992. These accidents resulted in 3,560 injuries and \$20.2 million in property damage.

The majority of deaths were caused by capsizing or falls overboard. Overloaded boats often contribute to these accidents, and boaters should know their boat's capacity limitations and be sure everyone wears a personal flotation device.

Collisions were the type of accident most reported in 1993, resulting in \$5.8 million in damage. Sixty-five percent of all collisions involved open motorboats or personal watercraft. Accidents like these can be avoided if boat operators pay attention, stay alert and follow the "rules of the road" even when conditions are ideal. Statistics show that most fatalities occur in calm waters with light winds and good visibility.

Summer is a popular time to boat, but it is also when nearly half of all fatalities occur. People enjoy being on the water on a hot day, but many foolishly consume alcohol while boating. Alcohol and boating are a deadly combination. Boaters are 10 times more likely to be involved in a fatal accident if they operate a boat while intoxicated.

The Coast Guard reports that people between 20 and 29 lost their lives in accidents more than any other age group, and 13 victims were 12 or younger. The report also indicates that approximately 80 percent of all fatalities occurred on boats where the operator had little or no boating education.

Boating safety courses are provided free of charge by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the Coast Guard Auxiliary and the U.S. Power Squadrons. To attend a boating safety course offered by the Commission, call 717-657-4540. To sign up for a Coast Guard class, call 1-800-368-5647.

When boating this season remember, "Boat Smart, Boat Safe, Boat Sober."—*Charrie Seifert.*

## Seven WCO Vacancies Filled

Seven Fish and Boat Commission Waterways Conservation Officers (WCOs) have been assigned to new districts. These assignments fill vacancies created by recent WCO transfers.

New assignments include: Southern Montgomery County, Gerald A. Barton; northern Washington/southern Beaver counties, Raymond J. Borkowski; central Erie County, Ann M. Caretto; Cumberland County, Craig A. Garman; Lebanon/southern Dauphin counties, William E. Martin; Philadelphia County, Robert A. McClellan; and southcentral Crawford/eastern Mercer counties, Thomas J. Tarkowski.

## Backtalk

Would you like a photograph of you and your catch to appear in *Pennsylvania Angler*? Send a photograph of you and your catch to the *Angler* for publication consideration in the "Currents" section. Please send only snapshots and prints, either color or black-and-white. Please—no slides and no pictures larger than 8x10. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want your picture returned.

The Fish & Boat Commission also invites you to write letters to the editor in this space if you have an idea on *Pennsylvania Angler* content, a question or concern about the Commission or about fish and fishing, or a helpful idea for anglers or boaters. Letters are edited for clarity and space considerations.

Address correspondence to: Art Michaels, Editor, *Pennsylvania Angler*, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.



## More Lunkers Lurking This Trout Season

Anglers seeking "the big one" this trout season don't have to look any farther than their favorite stream or lake. Odds are, a lunker is lurking there. A program begun last year by the Fish and Boat Commission is providing more trophy trout for anglers to pursue.

In 1994, the Commission began holding back one percent of its hatchery trout production to allow an extra year's growth. Those 50,000 fish now measure upwards of 14 inches and are being stocked for the 1995 trout season. The "holdovers," along with the roughly 10,000 palomino trout and 20,000 to 25,000 brood trout normally released each year, bring the total to more than 80,000 trophy-sized

trout available for distribution through the stocking program.

Trophy trout will be mixed with normal stocking allotments and distributed equally throughout the state.

"By allowing these fish an extra year's growth, we're able to give more anglers across the state the chance to catch a larger than usual trout. Hopefully, the availability of fish of this size and the opportunity to catch one of them will add to all anglers' enjoyment of the sport," said Tom Greene, Commission Coldwater Unit Leader.—*Dan Tredinnick.*

## Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Bryan*



If a rising trout refuses your fly, it might be because of the size of the fly. Try a smaller size of the same fly before abandoning it for an entirely different pattern.

When storing fly-tying materials, it is important to keep them easily accessible while keeping them free from bugs. Check the housewares section of your local department store and purchase some plastic storage containers. They are airtight and transparent, which makes finding the material you need very easy.

If you find yourself fishing trout water that is a little off-color, use a heavier tippet. The fish won't be as spooky as they might be in clearer water, and the heavier tippet gives you an advantage while playing fish. It is also a little easier to pull your fly loose from snags and hangups.

Bass like to lie under overhanging branches and bushes, and this can present a difficult casting situation for an angler. Just lay your rod over to the side and make a sidearm cast. If the angle is right, you will be able to skip the lure or fly a distance under the obstruction where the big fish tend to live.

It is very important when approaching a rising trout to size up the situation before making your cast. Double-check your tackle and then decide the best position from which to cast. Often a cross-stream cast is best because it allows you to measure a few casts off to the side, avoiding spooking the fish, and it lets you put the fly over the rise without "lining" the trout.

Fly rods are great tools for bluegills. Get the lightest rod you can find, a few small dry flies, and look for a weedy shoreline. Drop your fly close to the bank, along the weeds and lily pads, and let it rest a bit before twitching it. Let it rest and then twitch it again.

When you fight a fish with spinning tackle, do not reel while the fish is running because this twists your line. Instead, let the fish run and when it stops, retrieve line with a pumping action. Reel in line while lowering the rod. Then raise the rod and once again reel on the way down.

Lily pads are one of the most dependable places to look for largemouth bass in lakes and ponds. Fish can be found in pads throughout most of the year, especially if the pads extend into deeper water. Use a spoon tipped with a pork rind trailer and skim the lure across the tops of the pads. A jig-and-pig is also effective if you drop it into the pockets and holes between the pads.

When you're looking for smallmouth bass in lakes and ponds, seek out rocky points, boulders in the water, gravel bars and shoals. These places are prime spots for crayfish, the preferred food of the smallmouth.

*illustration- Ted Walke*



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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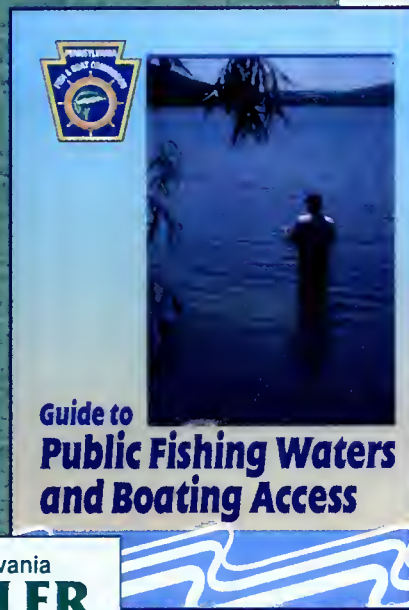
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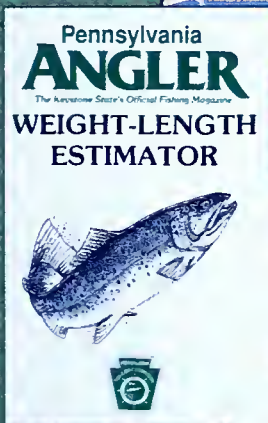
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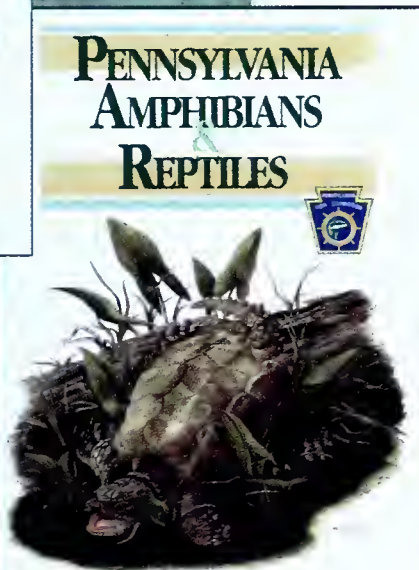
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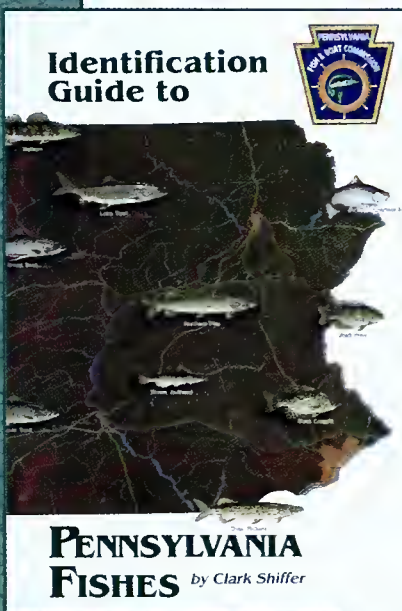
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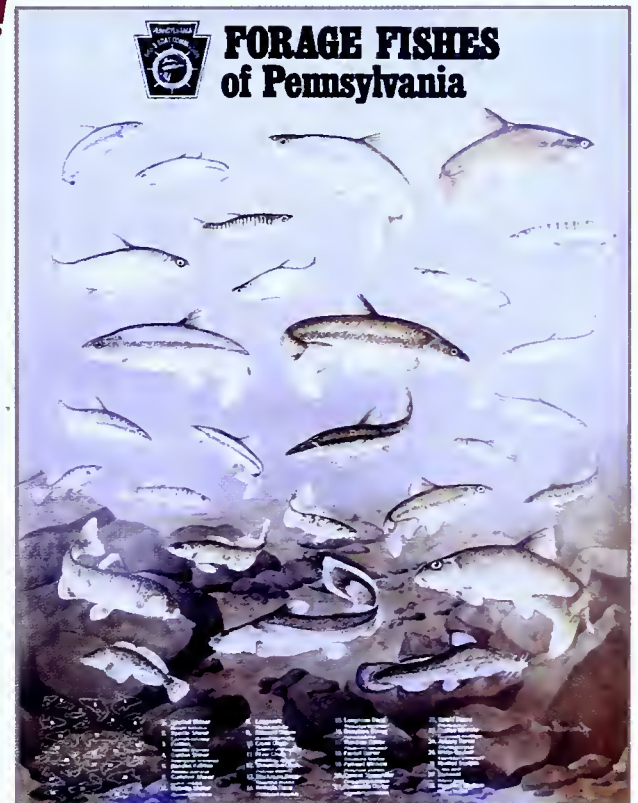
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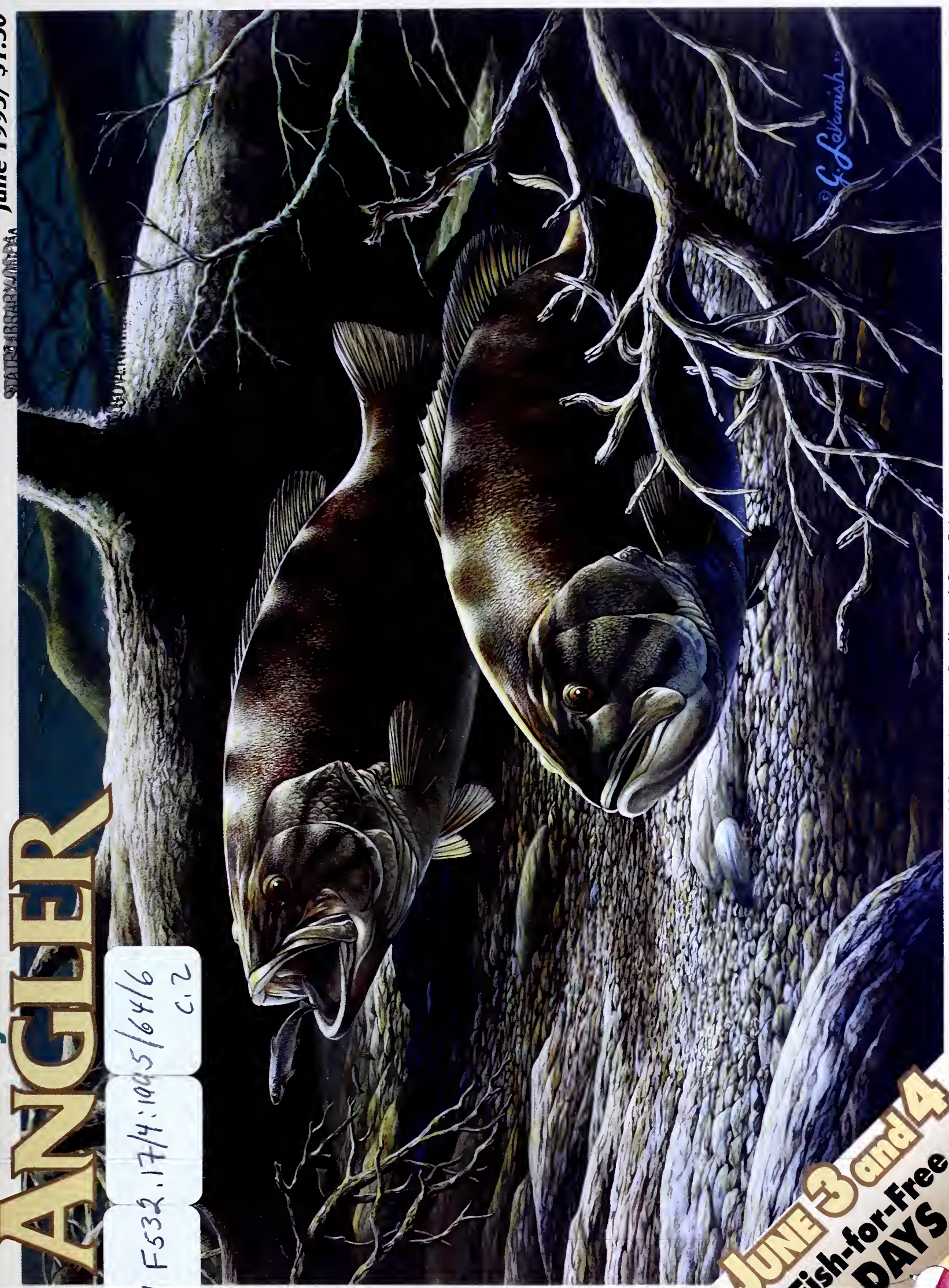


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G. Lavenish

**JUNE 3 and 4**  
Fish-for-Free  
**DAYS**

125th Anniversary Smallmouth Bass Print



# Straight Talk

## Can't Thank You Enough!

The Commissioners and the staff of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission want to thank the many volunteers who sponsor the 189 cooperative nurseries for the outstanding job they do each year in raising fish for the anglers of Pennsylvania. The additional fish provided by these nurseries complement the more than 100 million warmwater and coolwater fish already stocked each year by the Commission.

There are 155 sportsmen's organizations that manage these cooperative nurseries in 49 counties. Sixty-two of these nurseries have been in existence for over 25 years. The oldest participant in the program is the Windber Sportsmen Association, Somerset County, which has been a cooperator since 1932.

The Fish and Boat Commission supplies these nursery units with over one million free fingerling fish. We also provide them with technical guidance on rearing and stocking these fish. The co-ops then raise the fish at their own nursery facilities and at their own expense. The vast majority of the cooperative nurseries specialize in trout production. Last year coldwater units stocked over 990,800 adult trout. Included in this total were 431,000 brook trout, 222,000 brown trout, 330,000 rainbow trout and 3,650 palomino trout. In addition, 90,800 steelhead and 128,000 chinook salmon were released into Commonwealth waters, thanks to the cooperative nursery program. The average length of the stocked salmonids is 11 inches.

Four warmwater nurseries stocked a total of 3,235 large-mouth bass into 10 southeast



**Peter A. Colangelo**

*Executive Director*

*Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*

Pennsylvania waterways. These bass ranged in size from six to 14 inches in length.

The coolwater nursery in Erie County released 2,000 walleye fingerlings into Presque Isle Bay.

The striped bass nursery stocked 78,000 striped bass (1+ to nine inches) into Raystown Lake, Huntingdon County.

The volunteers expended almost 162,000 hours of work in the operation and maintenance of their 189 nurseries and stocking programs.

Last year the co-op units spent \$279,000 of their own money raising fish. They also invested an additional \$146,000 making improvements to their facilities.

I also want to thank the Commission's dedicated Cooperative Nursery Unit staff for the important job they do in assisting the co-op nurseries.

Last year, they traveled more than 60,000 miles to conduct 388 inspections—120 of these were emergency visits.

Again, on behalf of everyone in the Commission and the anglers of Pennsylvania, we thank the cooperative nursery volunteers for their tremendous efforts in the production of fish.



*Peter A. Colangelo*



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**Pennsylvania  
ANGLER**  
*The Keystone State's Official Fishing Magazine*

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*This issue's front cover shows the 125th Anniversary Smallmouth Bass Print, by Pennsylvania artist George Lavanish. The print commemorates the 125th anniversary of the Commission's bass management. For complete information on obtaining prints, contact Wilderness Editions at 1-800-355-7645.*

**Sneak Preview of February 1996**

The February 1996 *Angler* is going to be special. In addition to our usual 32 pages, the issue will include a 16-page publication on shad restoration in the Susquehanna River. The publication will focus on the history of shad restoration, descriptions of fish species involved, current restoration efforts, restocking and biomonitoring, current successes and future challenges, connection to other Chesapeake Bay programs, public involvement, and the benefits of shad restoration. A team of employees from the Fish & Boat Commission, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation is currently preparing this comprehensive publication.

Because this publication will be included in the regular February 1996 issue, make sure your subscription is current. This is one keeper you'll want to hold on to.

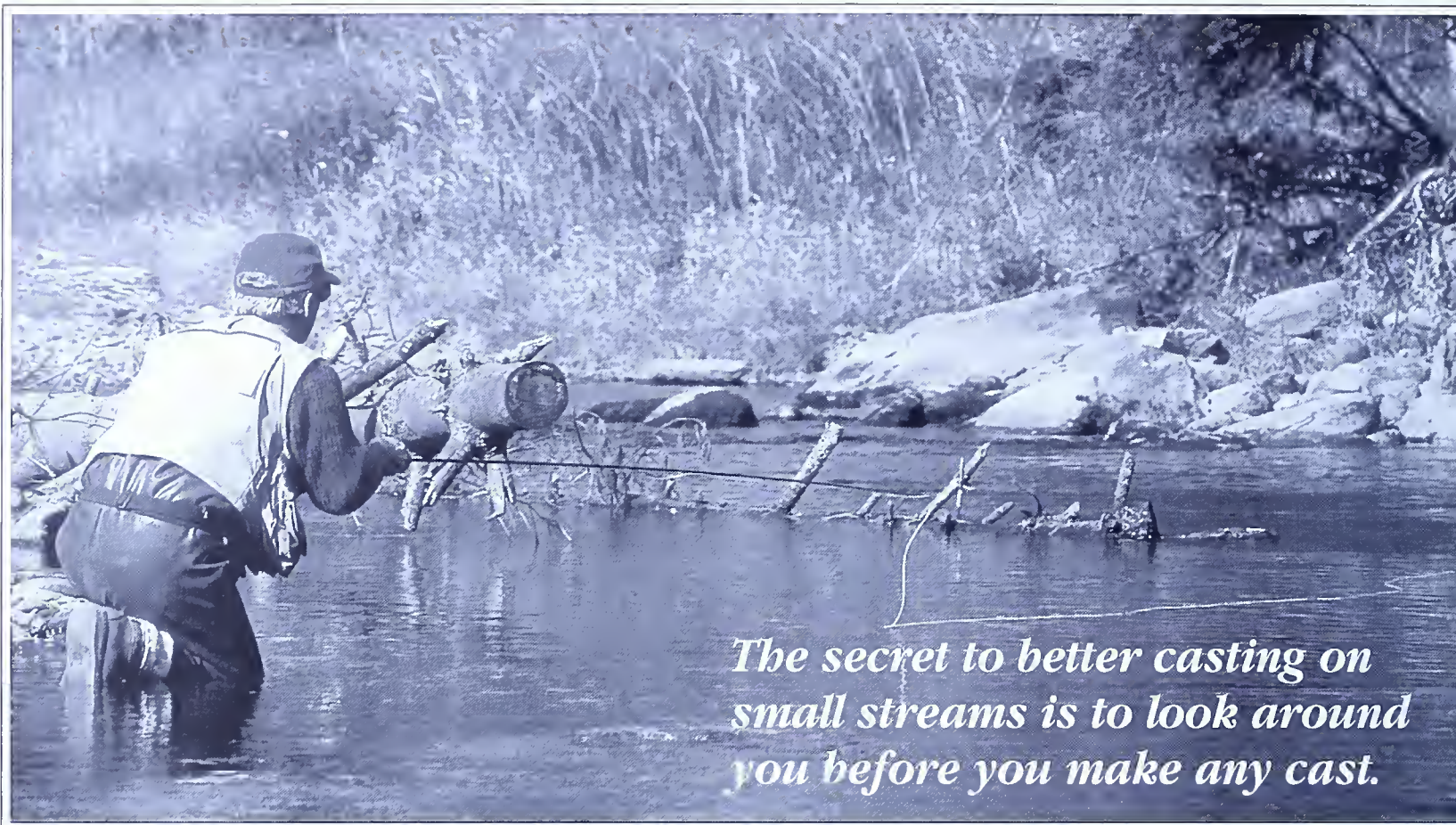
Susquehanna River shad restoration will spawn interesting developments for conservation and angling groups. The Delaware River Shad Fishermen's Association (DRSFA) was founded nearly 20 years ago to maintain some 300 miles of clean, free-flowing river for the shad and for the anglers who pursue them. Will Susquehanna River anglers create a Susquehanna River Shad Fishermen's Association? Although the Susquehanna has no open shad season now, as the Delaware did when DRSFA was formed, perhaps forming a Susquehanna River group would hasten the arrival of that day.

—**Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.**



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*The secret to better casting on small streams is to look around you before you make any cast.*

# Small-Stream Tactics

by Charles R. Meck

As the opening day of the Pennsylvania grouse season started, Craig Josephson and I fished a small southwestern Pennsylvania trout stream. Nearby gunshots reminded us that we probably should have hunted that morning than be on a stream holding streambred brown and native brook trout. But by accident we discovered this un-fished gem of a trout stream with plenty of streambred browns and native brook trout earlier that year. It was no accident that we fly fished this small stream this late in the season. Small streams hold trout all months of the year.

For more than I care to remember I have fly fished streams small enough to jump across. I even cut my teeth on these small streams. And I continue to this day to enjoy these small stream gems thoroughly and their unending supply of native trout—even while others hunt.

More than 45 years ago I fished my first small trout stream in Schuylkill County in southeastern Pennsylvania. I hiked four miles into the desolate, small, four-foot wide, crystal-clear stream. To the left, right and overhead thick, green rhododendron bushes prevented almost any type of cast. I had no bamboo, fiberglass or graphite fly rod to cast. I carried only an old metal telescoping rod—a poor excuse for a fly rod. When I entered the stream I saw a half-dozen brook trout scurry downstream away from me. The first hour I spent getting my Royal Coachman out of every nearby branch along the bank. I shortly began to question whether the frustration of attempting to cast was worth the effort. For each minute my pattern spent on the water, I

spent five minutes untangling the line or fly from a nearby bush. Many anglers quit in disgust shortly after they attempt fly fishing their first small stream. At that point I doubted that I'd ever try this type of fly fishing again.

It took me more than an hour to catch my first brook trout on a fly on that small eastern Pennsylvania trout stream. That first eight-inch brook trout, and many others since, motivated me to continue a long tradition of small-stream fly fishing right up to the present. The tranquil unspoiled environment of many small, native trout streams makes fishing on them well worth the frustration. You'll soon find that catching beautifully colored streambred trout produces a real high. On streams where you only infrequently see another angler and no path along the stream, you'll find that an eight-inch native excites you as much as catching a 15-inch stocked trout. On these small streams to succeed you have to prepare for a totally different way of fly fishing.

When I bought the proper fishing gear for these small streams I began enjoying fly fishing on them. A six-foot to eight-foot rod with a balanced reel helped me cast much more effectively. Once I learned to look overhead, to the right, to the left, behind and in front of me before I cast on those bush-lined small streams, I began to catch more trout.

When I began to learn a few unique casts designed for special small-stream situations, I also caught more trout. And when I began accepting the fact that small streams hold plenty of native





*Remember to carry a good supply of terrestrials when you fly fish small streams. Beetles, crickets and ants work well, but they're difficult to follow because most patterns are black. Use patterns that have a red, orange or white spot on top to help you follow the pattern in low light.*



and streambred trout that act differently than planted trout, I caught more fish.

The better you're prepared to cope with these three small-stream problems, the better you'll succeed. These three obstacles, plus a good supply of appropriate fly patterns, can make you a much better small-fly fisher. Let's look at each.

## Rods

That telescoping rod I owned certainly didn't help me enjoy fishing small streams. Nowadays anglers can purchase a good graphite fly rod specifically designed for small-stream fly fishing. I prefer one seven to 7 1/2 feet long designed for a 4 or 5 fly line with an appropriate matching and balanced reel. On most streams I use a leader six to seven feet long with a 4X or 5X tippet. Make the tippet no longer than 15 to 20 inches. Longer leaders only get you in trouble. Don't go finer than 5X on the tippet—most of the time a 4X tippet works, and the extra strength helps you dislodge flies from leaves and branches more quickly.

Ralph Dougherty of McKeesport once said that he feels like he's fishing in a tunnel when he fishes on a small stream. First and foremost, when you're casting here you'll find that every branch, bush, leaf and blade of grass along the stream reaches out to grab your fly. Even after these decades of fly fishing I often spend more time getting flies untangled than casting over trout. The secret to better casting on small streams is to look around you before you make any cast. Remember that on these small streams you have precious little room to cast. Take a few seconds before you cast to each new riffle or pool. Check your backcast to see if you have room. Look overhead and see if you have room to cast there. After you see what kind of room you have to cast, then decide what type of cast you'll use.

## Casting

Anglers often get into trouble on small streams because they

think and act like they're fly fishing on larger streams. Often that overhand cast that you're comfortable with just won't work here—there isn't enough room to cast that way. Often a side-arm cast that brings the fly just above the water's surface works just fine. If you don't have any room to backcast, then try a roll cast. Lift your rod up and roll the line out. In really close quarters I use a bow-and-arrow cast. By holding the fly and leader in one hand and the fly rod in the other, you can aim the fly exactly where you want it to float. The bow-and-arrow only works on short casts less than 15 feet long. But when there's scarce little room to cast, try the bow-and-arrow cast.

If all other types of casts fail, you try a flipping cast. Hold the fly in your left hand (if you're right-handed) and the rod in your right hand and just flip the fly to a predetermined spot. This also works best on short casts, and it's so simple that few anglers ever think of using it.

In small-stream casting, anything goes. Even the most unorthodox cast, if it reaches the location you want, is acceptable. If you're right-handed you might want to try some casts with your left hand and vice versa. After you've placed that fly just where you want it, get ready for some action. Often these native trout hit almost immediately after the fly has landed, so it's important to get ready for any action as soon as the fly hits the water.

When fly fishing on a small stream, remember that many of the trout you're fishing over are streambred trout. First and foremost



# Small-Stream Tactics

you must approach each productive-looking pool, riffle and pocket water very carefully and furtively. Your approach to the stream can mean the difference between a good day and a poor one. More often than not, once you've learned to cope with these wily natives, you'll find yourself bending, kneeling, stooping and hiding behind every boulder, log and tree you can find. Often you'll cast from a bent or prone position, hoping not to disturb any of the trout in a pool. Very often you'll see your cast drooped over a log on the stream, and if you do catch a trout you'll have to lift the fish up over the log.

Even when your approach is perfect, you'll see trout scurrying upstream and downstream. Wild trout behave differently than planted fish and often stay within a few feet of good cover.

So you have a good fly rod, you've practiced some of the unusual casts you'll need for these small streams, and you realize that native and streambred trout react differently than planted trout. What else should you know about fly fishing on those small streams? It's essential that you carry a good supply of fly patterns that seem to produce in a variety of situations.

## Flies

Under most conditions you'll discover that trout in small streams are not very selective. If you prefer using dry flies, try using attractors and terrestrials. Both the Wulff Royal Coachman and the Patriot work well in low light, heavy canopy conditions because both have white wings. You can easily follow these wings in most instances.

I developed the Patriot more than 10 years ago and have used it consistently on small streams for the past decade. It far out-fishes any other dry fly pattern I've ever used. With its white calf tail wings, brown hackle and tail, and smolt-blue Krystal Flash body with a midrib of red floss, the Patriot brings plenty of trout to the surface. Craig Josephson has often seen native trout hit the Patriot four and five times before he caught them. Don't be without this deadly small-stream pattern.

Remember to carry a good supply of terrestrials when you fly fish small streams. Beetles, crickets and ants work well, but they're difficult to follow because most patterns are black. Use patterns that have a red, orange or white spot on top to help you follow the pattern in low light. And don't worry if that ant sinks on you—trout often take sunken terrestrials.

If you prefer using wet flies, then you have a great selection. My top choice under all conditions is a size 16 Bead Head Pheasant Tail Nymph. This pattern works under all conditions in all seasons of the year. Use the wet fly with a dry fly as a strike indicator placed just six inches to a foot above the wet fly, depending on the depth and type of water you're fishing. This way you'll catch trout whether they're looking to the surface or underneath for food.

I'll never forget that first time Craig Josephson used the short tandem of the Patriot and Bead Head on a small stream. He tied a size 16 Bead Head Pheasant Tail Nymph six inches behind the Patriot dry fly to see if the setup would work. While Craig used two patterns I used only the Patriot dry fly. Craig fished behind me on a small stream one early October. In water that I had just fished, Craig continually picked up trout behind me on the Bead Head. At the end of the day we tallied up our catch. Craig had out-fished me three to one with that tandem setup. So if you want to increase your catch greatly on these

small streams, you definitely have to try the tandem setup with the Patriot and the Bead Head.

If you use the tandem setup on small streams, make certain you don't use a tippet finer than 4X. If you do you'll find yourself trying constantly to untangle the two patterns all day long.

If you plan to fly fish in early spring or under heavy runoff conditions, you might want to take a couple of patterns like a Woolly Bugger, Lady Ghost and Green Weenie for those small streams. You'll find that the Green Weenie works well almost any time on these small streams. Tie some in sizes 10 and 12 on long shank hooks. Add some weight to the body to make them sink faster. Green Weenies also work well tied behind the Patriot.

## Hatches

Don't overlook hatches on some of these small streams. Some of the greatest and most productive green drake hatches I've ever witnessed occurred on small streams. Here, green drakes often emerge all day long and trout continuously feed during the hatch. You'll often note that the drakes are a size or two smaller than those on Penns Creek and other larger streams. So carry some patterns tied on size 12 or 14 long-shank hooks.

George Harvey often talks about the 17-inch streambred brown trout he once caught on a small stream during a green drake hatch. That huge trout left the protection of an undercut bank to feed on naturals floating nearby. If you hit a green drake hatch on one of these streams, you'll note immediately that trout lose their timidity during the hatch. Often you'll find yourself fishing over trout rising to green drakes for several hours. On one Blair County small stream that holds a green drake hatch, I saw trout rising to drakes for more than four hours one afternoon. Some of these trout measured over 12 inches long.

Unlike larger streams you'll also find that few trout on these smaller streams refuse your pattern during a drake hatch. On Penns Creek I've often quit in disgust because either trout refused my pattern or there were too many naturals floating on the surface. You won't find either problem on small streams. Trout readily take any pattern closely resembling the natural, and you'll find only a few naturals emerging at any one time.

You'll find other hatches on some of these small gems. The dark green drake often appears at the same time as the green drake. I've often seen both of these huge mayflies appearing in the same pool on a small stream. You'll also find blue quills, sulphurs and hendricksons emerging on these branches and tributaries.

After a lifetime of enjoyment on small streams, I didn't mind hearing those October shots at grouse and squirrels. I know that small streams also offer a fantastic outdoor experience. Any beautifully colored native trout that you catch in this pristine environment is an added bonus. You too can enjoy small-stream fly fishing if you prepare yourself for the trip. Remember that fly fishing on these miniature streams presents many problems. Look around before you cast, and be prepared to use many different and some unorthodox casts. Be ready by taking the proper equipment, which includes a seven-foot fly rod and a balanced reel. And don't forget that leader—it shouldn't be any longer than seven feet. Once you have the proper equipment, the proper frame of mind and a good selection of patterns, you are ready to explore new territory and enjoy fly fishing on that small stream where few others visit. Once you attain a certain skill level, you too can enjoy the great outdoors and fly fishing on those great small streams of Pennsylvania.



# BLADIES

## for Summer Largemouths

by Darl Black

Sweeping my rod tip to 12 o'clock, the graphite shaft bowed under the weight of a suspected largemouth.

"That's three hits on your last three casts!" said an astonished Lee Duer, who had been tossing a six-inch plastic worm to the same structure. Convinced my lure was working magic, he said, "I didn't bring any blade baits. Got an extra one?" The question was meekly posed, since Lee had snickered when I tied on the blade bait back at the ramp.

"I suppose you might find another one in my box," I said, knowing well I had a tray filled with blades of different colors and sizes. "But first, get the net under this monster." The largemouth turned out to be a solid four-pounder. The previous two had weighed around three pounds each.

This time the blade had clearly outfished plastic worms and deep-diving crankbaits, both of which I had cast over the spot before throwing the blade. I was learning that a blade bait often triggers strikes from largemouths when traditional lures fail.

Later that afternoon when Lee boated his second largemouth on a borrowed blade, he said, "Guess I'll be adding some blades to my summertime bass box."

### Overview

Exactly what is a blade bait? Imagine a weighted willow-leaf spinner blade with hooks—that gives you a rough idea. Many anglers refer to it as a hybrid lure with the bottom-knocking potential of a jig, the vibration of a crankbait, and the flash of a spinnerbait. To me a blade bait is a blade bait—it is unlike anything else in the tackle box.

Blade baits incorporate a lead head molded to a thin, flat tear-drop-shaped metal blade rigged with one or two treble hooks. The Silver Buddy is a typical traditional blade bait. Some manufacturers have designed blades with a cupped or concave body, such as Luhr-Jensen's Ripple Tail and Reef Runner's Cicada. Bullet Lures makes a blade bait, the Bullet, from zinc instead of steel and lead.

The line is attached to a snap placed through a hole on the bait's back. Line should never be tied direct to the lure. The metal edge will cut the monofilament when pressure is applied. Besides, a light-wire round-bend snap increases the lure's action.

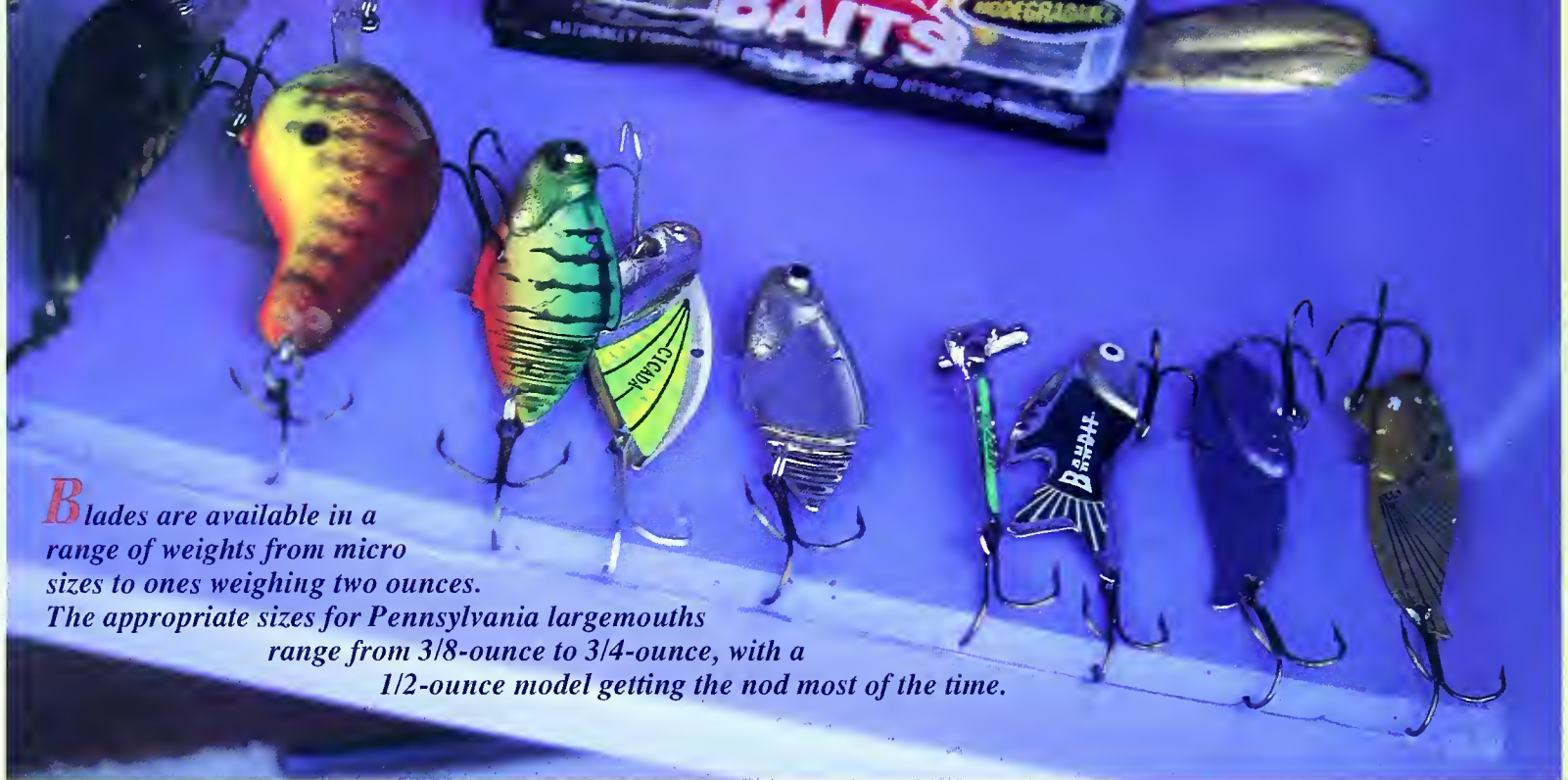
In most instances, fishing a blade involves two distinct processes—an attracting step and a triggering step. When pulled

Blades are:  
(left column,  
top to  
bottom)  
Sonar, Silver  
Lucky and  
Bullet;  
(right  
column, top  
to bottom)  
Cicada,  
RippleTail  
and Bandit.



**W**hen pulled through water, the blade vibrates wildly, attracting fish with both sound and flash.





**B**lades are available in a range of weights from micro sizes to ones weighing two ounces. The appropriate sizes for Pennsylvania largemouths range from 3/8-ounce to 3/4-ounce, with a 1/2-ounce model getting the nod most of the time.

through water, the blade vibrates wildly, attracting fish with both sound and flash. However, when given slack line, the bait falls toward the bottom in a tight spiral. The drop becomes the injured baitfish aspect, which convinces fish to strike.

Regardless of species, the majority of hits occur as the bait is falling. Therefore, instead of steadily cranking the lure, an angler should include the combination of both forward (or upward) vibration and a slack line drop in the presentation. Of course, as with any guideline, there are bound to be exceptions.

Blades catch any fish that swims, from the largest gamefish to the least favorite rough fish. Pennsylvania anglers familiar

positioning with the electric motor, so in desperation I jugged a blade on points while letting the boat drift with the breeze. In three passes I managed a pair of largemouths about two pounds each—far from spectacular, but the results created enough interest to continue experimenting.

At first I tried a blade only if a breeze made worm fishing difficult or the structure was too deep for a crankbait. Eventually, as confidence grew with each largemouth caught, the blade saw more and more water time. Today, when preparing to fish a reservoir for largemouths, the blade gets first-class seating right beside the plastic worm, grub, jig-and-pig and crankbait for presentations to deepwater largemouths.

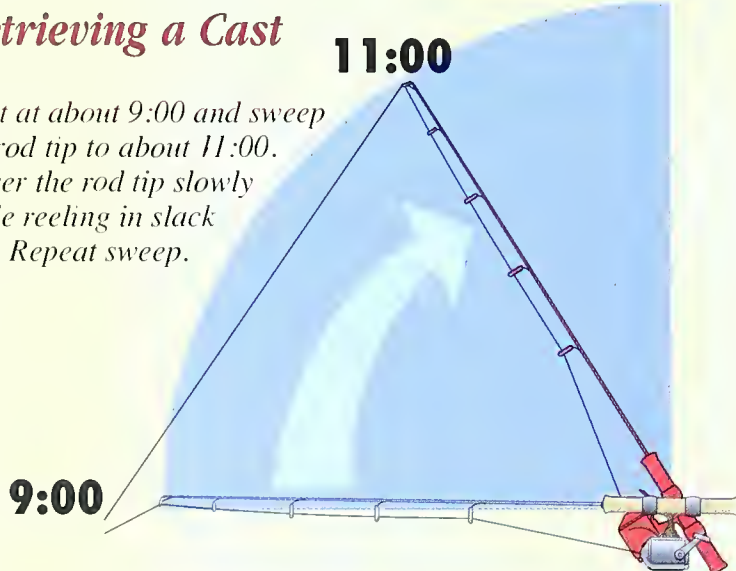
Why add a blade to your summer arsenal? Because it provides depth and speed control that few other lures can match. A blade goes deeper than any crankbait on the market. By actually rubbing bottom, you learn the contour and location of bass-holding objects. The blade fishes faster than a worm or grub while providing a level of flash and sound that soft-plastic lures cannot achieve.

### Tackle

Blades are available in a range of weights from micro sizes to ones weighing two ounces. The appropriate sizes for Pennsylvania largemouths range from 3/8-ounce to 3/4-ounce, with a 1/2-ounce model getting the nod most of the time. They may be fished on either spinning or casting outfits—the choice is yours. The important considerations are rod action and line weight.

### Retrieving a Cast

Start at about 9:00 and sweep the rod tip to about 11:00. Lower the rod tip slowly while reeling in slack line. Repeat sweep.



with the blade consider it to be most effective during the cool water of spring and fall when directed at deepwater walleyes and smallmouths. But as I have learned over the years, it has much wider application.

### Switch to warmwater largemouths

I have been using blade baits for over 15 years. However, I never considered the blade bait as a serious lure for summer largemouths until about four years ago. The transition was by accident.

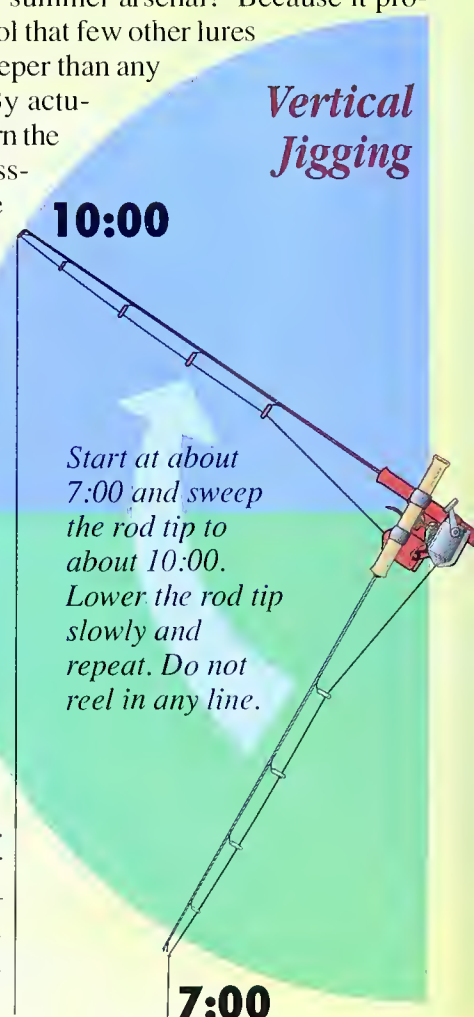
One summer day when I could not scrounge a single bass from an often-fished reservoir with my usual lineup of largemouth baits, I tried a blade. A stiff breeze hampered exact

### Vertical Jugging

10:00

Start at about 7:00 and sweep the rod tip to about 10:00. Lower the rod tip slowly and repeat. Do not reel in any line.

7:00





## Casting a Point



I prefer a six- to seven-foot medium-power graphite blank with a powerful butt and a fast tip. A rod that's too soft will not manipulate the bait correctly nor achieve a solid hookset. On the other hand, a rod that's too stiff will not transmit the vibration of the bait properly and may literally rip the bait out of the mouth of the bass.

My favorite blade bait rod is a six-foot spinning rod I built some years ago for worm fishing. However, one drawback to using a spinning outfit is being restricted to no more than 12-pound-test monofilament. Jumping to 14-pound-test line on a standard-size spinning reel usually results in line not laying properly on the spool. If targeting relatively snag-free humps and roadbeds, it is possible to get by with 12-pound-test.

However, when confronted with structure with lots of stumps, switch to a casting outfit with an abrasion-resistant 14- to 17-pound-test monofilament to recover more snagged baits.

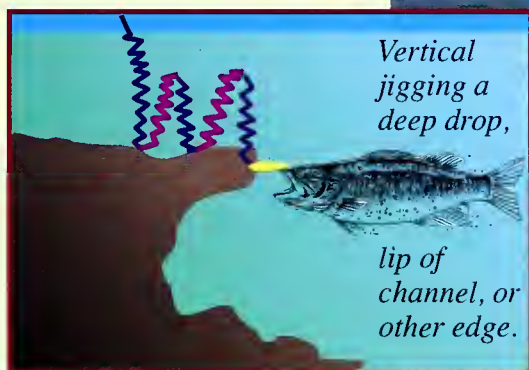
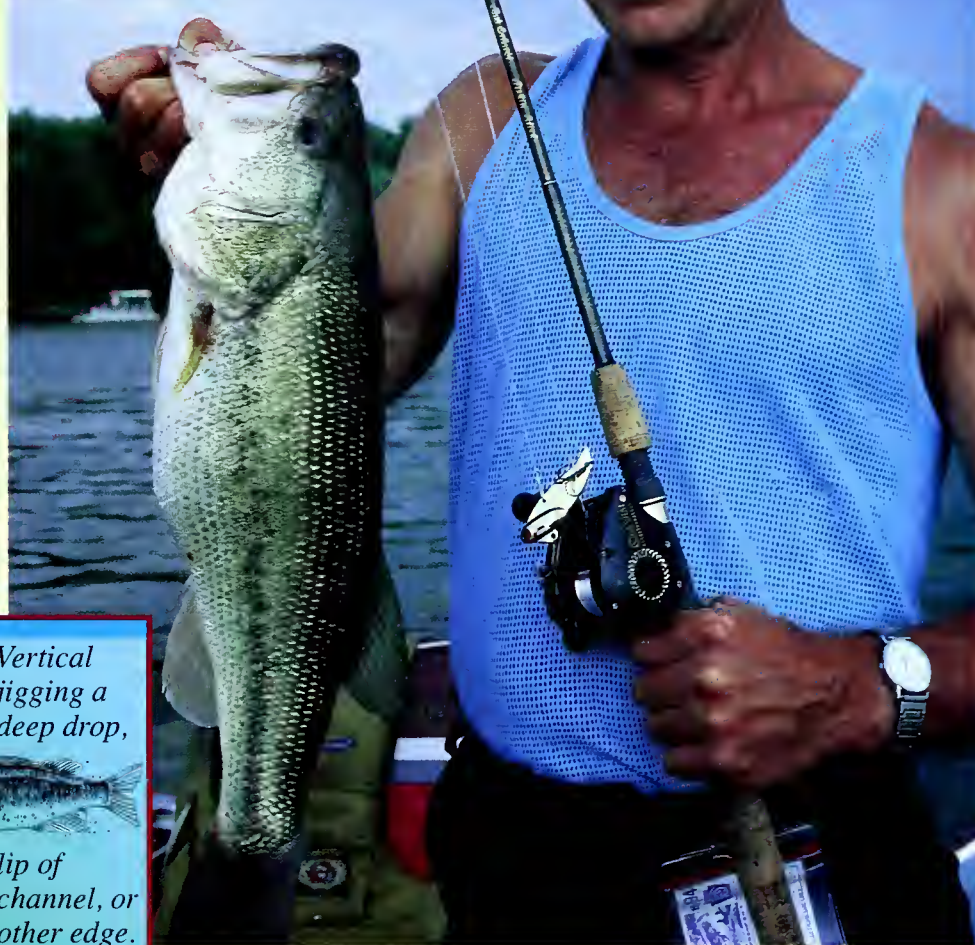
What about using blade baits on the new braided lines? Having experimented with braided lines for two years, I can positively say "Not for me at this time." The problems with braided line include too much buoyancy, especially when jigging in deep water, inability to slingshot hung lures free from snags, and lack of shock strength.

## Presentation

In general terms, the same blade bait techniques that take other species take largemouths. When fishing smallmouths and walleyes, I jig vertically about 80 percent of the time because I am targeting depths to 35 feet. But largemouths are rarely that deep. Two to 18 feet is the usual depth range for summertime largemouths. Keeping in mind there are other lures that are better suited for the shallowest water, I consider a blade for depths greater than seven feet. When probing water between seven and 15 feet, I generally cast the blade.

The basic casting technique involves swimming the lure with a lift-and-drop retrieve that moves the bait in small hops. Following the cast, hold the rod tip at 10 o'clock and watch for a

**Blade baits often triggers strikes from largemouths when traditional lures fail.**



*Vertical jigging a deep drop, lip of channel, or other edge.*

possible strike as the blade sinks to the bottom. Then, dropping the rod tip to almost 9 o'clock, carefully reel in slack. Next, sweep the rod tip to about 11 o'clock and hold it there until the blade falls to the bottom again. The clock positions are only approximate guidelines.

The rod tip should not be simply lifted as you might do in worm fishing. Nor should it be snapped too hard, otherwise the bait's rear treble hook will tangle the line. A firm sweep definitely describes the rod movement.

The rod must move far enough and fast enough to generate lure vibration. Flat-sided blades require more energy (translated as greater force and higher hops) to activate the lure. On the other hand, cupped blade baits must be finessed (translated as gentler, smaller hops). Too hard a sweep causes a cupped blade to roll over instead of vibrate.

Vertical jigging is effective in certain largemouth situations. This permits pinpoint fishing of edges such as creek channel lips, or targeting individual pieces of isolated cover visible on the depthfinder. Vertical jigging means fishing the blade straight down like a yo-yo. The bait is free-spoiled to the bottom, the reel engaged and slack line taken up as the rod tip is lowered



# BILADIES

## for Summer Largemouths

to within 12 inches of the surface. Using a firm sweep, move the rod tip to the 8, 9 or 10 o'clock position, depending on the amount of jump desired in the lure. Then lower the rod tip slightly faster than the line is sinking, watching for line movement that would indicate a strike. Lure jumps of about 12 inches are most fruitful in producing strikes from summer largemouths.

A blade bait does have limitations. With exposed treble hooks, a blade can be easily fouled in vegetation or snagged on solid obstacles. It is more prone to hanging on objects than a crankbait. The angle of a retrieved crankbait (diving lip down) protects its treble hooks. If nudged into a stump, give a crankbait some slack to float free. However, a blade has no lip protection and it sinks when you stop moving it. Simply put, a blade bait is not designed to be fished in heavy cover.

However, with some practice it is possible to fish it around and over some of those sticky situations. Here is an example. Fishing a blade through sporadic stumps on a sloping point can be deadly. Once I have established the bottom on the initial drop, I use high hops and anticipate the bottom as the bait free-falls after each rod sweep. Then, before the blade collides with a tangle of root tentacles, I sweep the rod tip upward once more. Sure, you hang wood now and then, but that is part of fishing.

I am partial to casting a blade on points, mid-lake humps and submerged roadbeds. I vertical jig it around bridge pillars and old submerged abutments. It can be deadly along the edge of a creek channel, but you must have the skill to maneuver around overhanging stumps. Also, try near-vertical jigging as the boat drifts across deep flats.

Of course, there are areas to avoid. Dense stump fields and brushpiles gobble blades, especially if broken strands of monofilament are tangled in the cover.

Vegetation fouls blades. But if the deep weed edge is a solid wall instead of sporadic clumps, it's possible to work a blade along the edge. Gravel or rock rubble does not pose a problem for a blade, but be sure to stay away from manmade riprap because the craggy rock edges and cavities consume baits.

### Hookset


Rarely does a strike occur on the forward or upward movement of a blade. Hits take place as the bait falls, or when it is

sitting on the bottom. Sometimes the strike will be felt in the rod, but often you don't detect a fish until you attempt to sweep the bait upward and encounter resistance. However, carefully ob-

serving the sinking slack line on the surface telegraphs a strike. It may be an obvious sideways movement, or only a slight tick.

Always set the hook immediately with a full upward rod sweep to about 12 o'clock. Keep the line taut, but don't attempt to "rush" the fish. If the hooks are not as sharp as possible, many fish will be missed.

My hooks are filed to a diamond cutting point with the barb squeezed flat. Flattening the barb increases the likelihood of penetration to the hook bend. Many fish are lost because the barb hinders penetration past the point. Then, if slack occurs in the line, the blade drops from the fish's mouth.

The blade bait is not the easiest lure to learn for largemouths, but once mastered it will become one of your favorite summer baits. 

## Reducing line twist

Blade baits are notorious for twisting line because the lure spirals as it falls. Using a ball-bearing swivel cuts down on the twist. The most effective use of a swivel is 12 to 18 inches above the bait. To save time on the water, monofilament leaders with a round-bend snap on one end and a ball-bearing swivel on the other end may be tied ahead of time.

When the line becomes too twisted to fish effectively, snip the lure and all terminal tackle from the line. Moving the boat at trolling speed, play the line out until 40 or 50 yards trails behind the boat. Continue trolling for five minutes. Then slowly reel in the line while maintaining pressure by running the line between your thumb and forefinger.—DB.

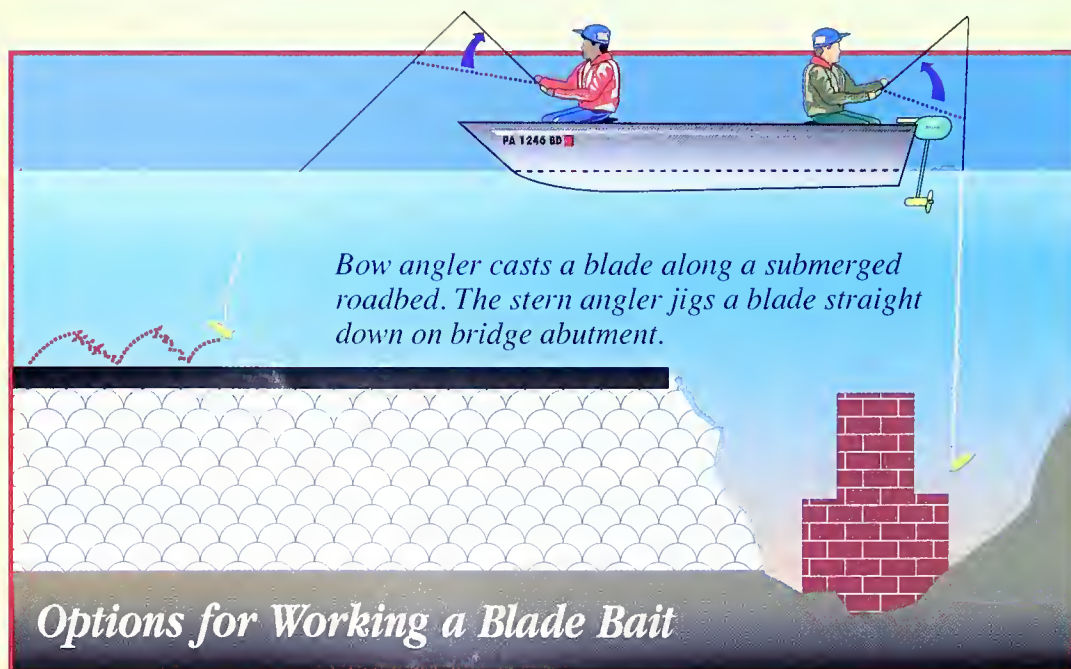
## Reducing blade loss

When fishing in largemouth habitat, anglers are bound to snag some blade baits. One way to reduce hang-ups is to snip the leading line on the front treble hook with wire cutters. The resulting double hook is less prone to snag stumps and brush.

Knowing how to free a snagged lure quickly is invaluable, not only saving a costly artificial but saving time, too. The following technique works on most artificial lures.

As soon as you realize a blade is hung on something other than a fish, immediately cease pulling on the bait. Holding the rod with one hand, point the tip skyward. Grasp the line with thumb and forefinger of the other hand between the reel and the first guide. Stretch the line just like pulling a bow string. When the line is completely taut and the rod is deeply bowed, release the line. At the same instance, whip the rod toward the snagged lure. Repeat two or three times if needed.

This slingshot approach can free most lures that are wedged in something, and it frequently dislodges hooks from wood. However, it is rarely effective if hung on someone's old line.—DB.





Your cast is perfect. The lime-color jig plops inches beyond a toppled, underwater oak. The lure sinks slowly, brushing a mossy limb, and continues downward. As you intently watch the line, it twitches, and you set the hook into something hefty.

The fish dashes and tangles in the oak limbs, but you use steady pressure and bring the fish toward you—its silvery head nodding with each turn of the reel. You grab the mouth of a crappie. A big, well-fed, ol' granddad crappie, the size that earns den-wall space, wins the area fishing contest and puts a smile on even the most veteran crappie fisherman.

### Big-crappie areas

"Big slabs" aren't your ordinary panfish. They never come as easy as youngster "specks." Whether you fish a lake or river where one-pounders reign as kings or you haunt a water that grows two- or three-pounders, large crappies can be caught. The first step to catching them is to discover your water's slab-crappie area.

In spring and early summer, big crappies are often in a shallow, vulnerable position. In June, you might encounter fish spawning at weeds, sunken wood and rocks in backwater coves and bays, on flats, and sometimes along the main lake or river bank. At other waters, such as the shallower, dingier impoundments in southeastern Pennsylvania, the big crappies have already spawned. However, these overlooked post-spawn fish may be holding not far from their nesting sites, suspended by nearby structure.

On a waterway of any type, you can find crappies in dozens of places. Certain areas, however, attract much larger fish than do other sections of the same water. One biologist who researched reservoir crappies for several years found that one cove would usually provide small one- and two-year-old crappies while another lake arm held lots of bigger four- to six-year old fish. The

# SECRETS

## OF CATCHING SLAB-SIZED CRAPPIES

by Gary Nelson



difference between the two arms was angling pressure.

The small-crappie cove held lots of algae blooms, mainly because it's a more fertile watershed. The water's not as clear, so the crappies spawn in more shallow water and this makes them much easier to catch. The fish were small because they were caught before they had a chance to grow very large.

At the other lake arm, though, the water's clear and the fish spawn deep. It's not very fertile, so the total number of fish isn't high. That makes them pretty tough to catch, so the area does not get as much pressure. Anglers don't take nearly as many crappies there, and the fish have

a chance to live longer and grow larger. The people who know how to catch them, though, are very successful.

Extra-clear water sections may rate as top spots on impoundments and natural lakes that have them, but on other waters, the unharvested crappie factor comes in another guise. At a shallower, murkier impoundment, one angling expert said that although a large bridge is the most popular spot with crappie anglers, the largest fish come from certain coves.

These coves might be out-of-the-way areas that require a long boat ride where you'd search for crappie cover such as flooded brush or vegetation. Or the cove could be nearby but

underfished because all of the cover is underwater—hidden until you find it by trolling or using a depth finder.

Big-crappie expert John J. Phillips, Jr., has spent many hours at the Delaware River. He told me that on rivers, he, too, looks for hidden cover and hard-to-fish areas.

Phillips once caught the Pennsylvania state record (three pounds, six ounces) and he currently holds the world record for white crappie on four-pound-test line (three pounds even.) His daughter



*Crappie-getting colors include chartreuse, white, black, pink, silver and gray for clear water, and chartreuse, white and two-tones for murky water.*



Patricia also captured a two-pound, 11-ounce crappie, the current two-pound-line world record. Phillips explained that one river cove, which attracts big crappies because of easy access to deep water, does get pressure. The big-crappie cove, however, is all hidden well below the surface.

## The right cover

Perhaps you've found an area with a few, if any, fishermen, but you think that many of its crappies go unharvested. This is an ideal area in which to find the cover that crappies love. Slabs are picky, though. Hefty crappies may shy away from dense branches and thick weeds.

"I've fished with a fellow," said one biologist, "who works brush piles. He felt that he'd catch small crappies around a recently dropped tree that still had a lot of small branches attached because the big crappies couldn't or wouldn't be attracted to this structure. It makes sense. A fish with a large body is not able to move through branches easily, so it may want to avoid them."

For springtime fishing, it's best to locate several structures at moderate to shallow depths so you're always able to fish a productive depth for the crappies, which move with the weather. For fishing later in the summer, the best structure lies deeper, at dropoffs and underwater islands near the water's thermocline. "Shallow" may mean only a few feet deep in murky water or 10 feet or more at one of our deeper impoundments. "Deep water" may mean 10 feet in murky water but 40-feet-plus in clear.

## Baits and lures

Generally, large fish eat large foods. The main factor to determine what fish eat is what's present and available. Fish are opportunists. For example, a two-pound crappie can eat a large shad, but it may not opt to do so if the small forage fish are the most abundant.

In springtime, crappies often eat small insects, and later, tiny newly hatched fish, and through summer, larger forage fish. Minnows or other baits of the same size or type are top offerings, but similar size jigs and sometimes tiny crankbaits may do as well or better. Crappie-getting colors include chartreuse, white, black, pink, silver and gray for clear water, and chartreuse, white and two-tones for murky water.

Using a depth finder or doing some experimental fishing shows you whether the crappies are hugging cover or are suspending near it. The position of the crappies determines the best fishing method, such as vertically jigging or pitching a jig to crappies in cover, or jigging, slow trolling or casting to fish in open water. Your choice of method, in turn, gives you more clues to the exact lure that will charm the big ones.

Slow, vertical jigging may work when crappies swim in shallow, murky water or in deeper water of any clarity. A 1/32-ounce jig tied to thin monofilament such as four-pound test may do, but in the real deep water, a heavier jig, such as 1/8-ounce, creates more line tension and you can more easily sense hits.

Casting is appropriate when fishing in the shallows of clear water or when shore fishing. Try a long rod, thin line, and a 1/16-ounce jig made of bulky material to slow its descent or

## OF CATCHING SLAB-SIZED CRAPPIES

use a minnow or jig below a bobber. Very slow trolling is a good method for suspended, open-water crappies, although this can spook the fish on top. Try 1/8-ounce jigs for deep fish or 1/16-ounce jigs at moderate depths.

Pitching or flipping a jig, however, rates as one of the top techniques for big crappies. A refinement of this general method is what John Phillips has used to catch record-breakers on the Delaware. The same method also shines on lakes.

Phillips uses 1/32- or 1/64-ounce marabou jigs. He doesn't use a 1/8-ounce lure unless the current's "really ripping." If the crappies are finicky, he tips the jig with a plastic tail to slow the lure down. He might use a white jig with a fluorescent red or green head in dingy water and a silver or ginger-brown jig when the water is clear.

## Light line is important

"The trick is light line," says Phillips. "If the water's dirty, I use four- or six-pound test. My choice depends on the amount of cover, how close to cover I'm fishing and how fast the current is moving. I like to use four-pound test a lot. When the water clears a bit, I use two-pound test. Then you have to retie every time you catch a fish. You also must feel the line the whole time it's in the water. Paying attention is especially important when that jig is falling because the fish pick it up ever so slowly."

"What I like to do is get to an area and let the boat drift in. I don't even use an electric motor. The noise pushes those big fish right out."

Phillips quietly anchors, then starts to cast.

"I'm casting maybe only eight feet from the boat. I'm just flipping the jig out where I can still control the line on the fall."

He lets the jig fall in stages, stopping the line now and then with his finger to feel for fish. At the same time, he's watching the line because sometimes the hit can be seen before it's felt.

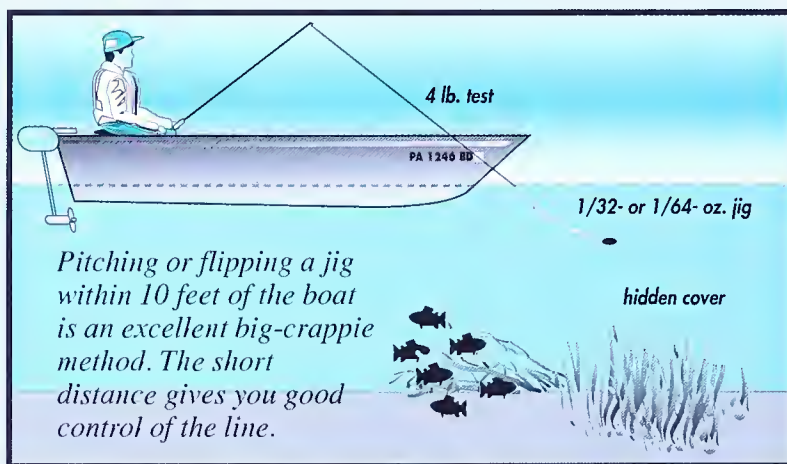
Phillips uses a net when landing big keeper crappies. He usually packs a long-handled net in his boat, but on one spring day he forgot to bring it. Phillips hooked into a huge crappie, one larger than

he'd ever landed. He worked the fish within netting distance, but the fish, which he estimated at close to 4 1/2 pounds, broke loose.

Phillips' tactics may catch fish anytime the fish swim reasonably shallow. After keeping a logbook, however, he's learned that overcast, windy days rate among the best.

There may also be an optimum time of day to pursue big slabs, and it depends on the crappie species. Anglers often find clear-impoundment black crappies are especially active and feeding before sundown and sometime at night. White crappies, generally the dominant species in murkier water, are different—a study at Conowingo Reservoir in southeastern Pennsylvania indicated most of the white's feeding occurred in morning and early afternoon.

However, whenever and wherever you fish, one thing is certain. It's always a pleasure to pursue and capture a big ol' granddad crappie.





# The Early Black Stonefly Nymph

by Chauncy K. Lively

photos by the author

Along many trout streams little black stoneflies are among the earliest harbingers of spring. Seeing them scurrying over the snow along the water's edge is always a cheering sight. They appear at a time when winter doldrums have reached their peak and the water seems to flow black between white banks of snow. But that's just a temporary state of mind. Funny how clear and sparkly the water appears when the banks are green.

Actually, "early black stonefly" is a generic designation of several small to mid-dling stoneflies that may appear as early as February. They include species of *Capnia*, *Allocaupnia* and *Taeniopteryx*, of which the latter were called "snowbank stoneflies" by Dr. Paul Needham, the eminent fisheries biologist. The winged adults are generally black or blackish-brown in color and range in size from less than a quarter-inch to about a half-inch in length. Similarly, with a few exceptions, the nymphs share a dark brownish-black appearance.

These little stoneflies emerge from late winter until early spring and often emerge when many early season anglers are on the streams. Of the books I have seen on the subject of Plecoptera, few discuss the emergence of stoneflies in detail, if at all. Generally, brief mention is made of the nymphs crawling out into the air on exposed boulders, logs or other protrusions from the surface to emerge into winged adults. That was my total conception of stonefly emergence for many years, as it was with other anglers of my acquaintance.

Then I had occasion to fish a gravel-bottom stream with no exposed boulders and I began to see little black stoneflies appear on the surface at midstream. At first I assumed they had flown there from the streamside foliage—perhaps to deposit their eggs. But as I watched—more intently now—I could see one after another of the little insects literally pop into view on the surface, struggle briefly to detach them-



selves from their shucks and fly away. It was definitely an emergence, unlikely as it may have seemed. Then I recalled an event on Penn's Creek some 15 years earlier.

Following a torrential downpour Penn's was out of its banks and the color of heavily creamed coffee. Pools of normally modest flow were now raging torrents and the boulders that punctuate the streambed were completely flooded over. But out in midstream, *Isonychia* duns—the big gray mayflies—were emerging from the surface. From everything I'd read—and from my own experience—*Isonychia* were supposed to emerge by crawling out of the water on boulders or logs, in the manner of stoneflies. However, now there were no exposed logs or boulders available and the mayflies had to resort to alternative means of emergence which nature provided.

Plainly, the little black stoneflies had been endowed with similar optional means of emergence. Nature accommodates all its creatures—big and small—with the gift of adaptability, without which survival would not be possible.

I reported what I had seen to a couple of close angling friends, and surprisingly they indicated they had observed similar happenings but had dismissed their significance, thinking they had possibly misidentified the little stoneflies. To me, seeing stoneflies behave like hatching

mayflies was a revelation, and it changed my whole approach to fishing stonefly nymphs. Previously I had fished them only dead drift and deep, assuming that the only opportunity trout had to capture them was during the drift or as they climbed boulders and logs to emerge. Obviously, the latter offers few fly fishing opportunities. But when they ascend to the surface from their bottom cover, they expose themselves in a significant way

and the trout are quick to seize the opportunity. The "Leisenring lift"—raising the rod tip occasionally during the drift to bring the nymph upward—imitates this activity. Actually, the ascent may also be accomplished on a dead drift-cast by allowing the nymph to swing downstream on a taut line at the end of the drift. When all the slack in the line and leader has been expended, the nymph rises to or near the surface.

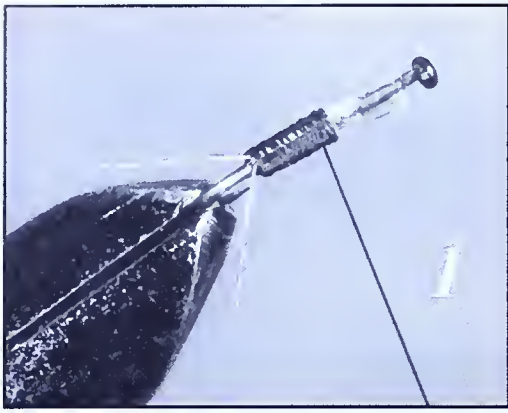
Unlike some of their cousins—such as *Perla* and *Acroneuria*—the early black stonefly nymphs are not broadly flat. Their abdomens are more nearly ovoid in cross section—that is, slightly more flat than round. To achieve this profile in the pattern we provide a flattish underbody by cementing a strip of .019-inch monofilament to each side of the shank. The underbody should not be tapered in the rear as with mayfly nymph patterns. The natural taper of the wound hackle rib provides the slight taper required in the abdomen.

Generally, I like to fish the Early Stonefly Nymph unweighted. However, I carry a few moderately weighted specimens for use in especially fast water. These are weighted by whipping a short piece of flat wrap-around lead, the length of the thorax, underneath the underbody in the thorax area before dubbing is applied. Such placement of the weight permits the nymph to swim naturally, without flipping over on its back.

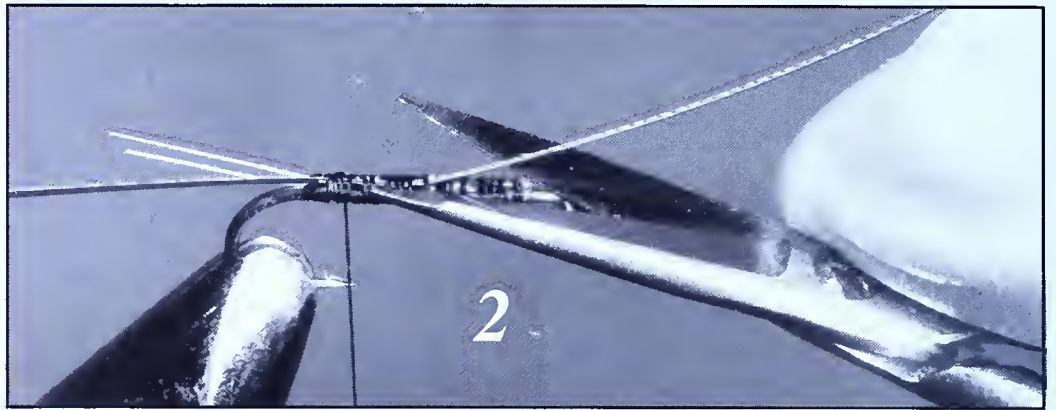




# The Early Black Stonefly Nymph



**1** Cut two strips of .019-inch monofil about 1/8-inch shorter than the hook shank and cement one to each side of the shank, forming a flat underbody. Tie in the thread at mid-shank and wind closely to the rear of the underbody. Strip barbules from two small brown hackles and tie in the ribs as tails. Wind over the tail butts to the mid-shank.



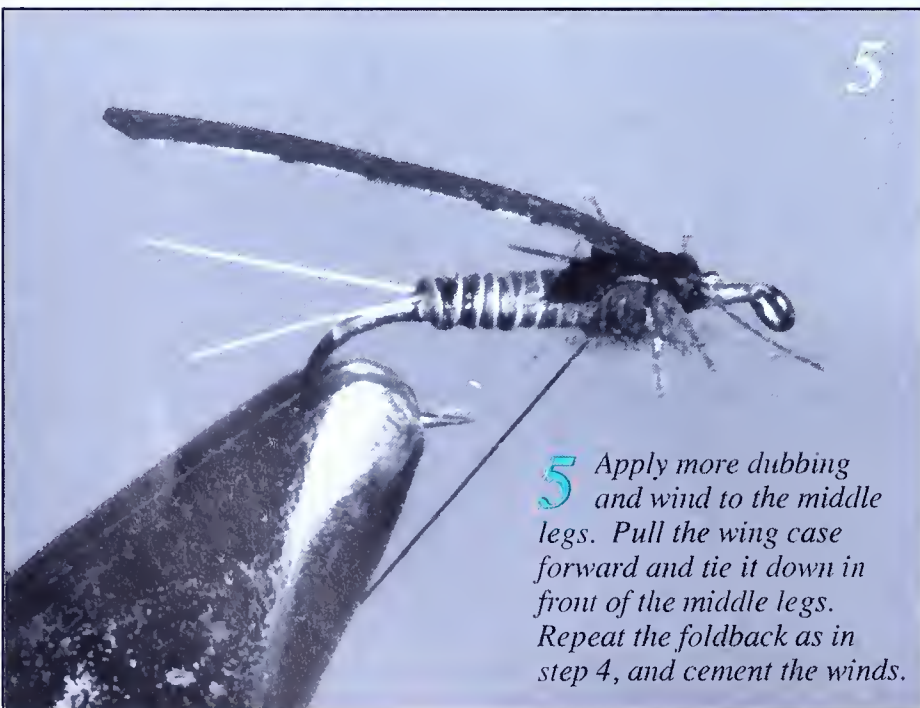
**2** Strip the barbules from a large black or brown hackle and soak the rib in water. Tie in the rib, tip forward, at the mid-shank and wind the thread over the rib to the base of the tails. Trim the excess rib and wind the thread forward to the mid-shank.



**3** Coat the underbody with Flexament and wind the hackle rib in close turns to form the abdomen. Cut three short lengths of flat nylon thread for the legs and tie them in as shown. Wind the thread back to the mid-shank, wax the thread and apply a little dubbing. Make one turn behind the rear legs.



**4** Cut a strip of wing case material slightly wider than the body and cut a notch in one end. With the notched end facing the rear and slightly overhanging the abdomen, tie it in with two turns in front of the rear legs. Fold the wing case back and wind two turns over the edge of the fold. Apply cement to the winds.



**5** Apply more dubbing and wind to the middle legs. Pull the wing case forward and tie it down in front of the middle legs. Repeat the foldback as in step 4, and cement the winds.

## Dressing: Early Black Stonefly Nymph

**Hook:** Size 14 or 16 Tiemco 5262 (2XL) or equivalent.

**Thread:** 6/0 black prewaxed.

**Tails:** Two stripped brown hackle ribs.

**Abdomen:** One large black or dark-brown stripped hackle rib.

**Legs:** Tan flat nylon thread, coated lightly with Flexament.

**Thorax dubbing:** Dark-brown fur or synthetic.

**Wing case:** Strip of polystyrene sheet plastic, sanded lightly and tinted dark brown with marking pen.



**6** Apply more dubbing and wind to one turn in front of the underbody. Pull the wing case forward and tie off behind the eye. Trim the excess. Finally, whip finish the head and apply head lacquer.



# On the Water

with F. Scott Morgan



## A Philadelphia Story

My father was not a fisherman. At least he wasn't until the last few years of his life. He was born and raised in the Frankford section of Philadelphia where, he used to tell me, he played half-ball and buck-buck for fun. The greenspace he and his friends knew was cemeteries and occasional trips to Pennypack Park. Marriage, a new job, and several moves later brought him and his young family to the suburbs, Abington, Montgomery County. He was living the American Dream of the 1950s and '60s: A family with four kids and a house in the suburbs, a lawn to mow, gardens to weed, shutters to paint, and fresh air to breathe. He loved it!

I was the one who brought fishing into the house, the oldest of the four children. I don't recall when I first wanted to go fishing. I was probably nine or 10. I do know that I was insistent in my asking. It was obvious, even to me, that my father had no interest in the subject, but constant pleading led to a toy fishing pole for a birthday.

He had no idea where to take me fishing, but an uncle who did know took us and his daughters to the old fish hatchery ponds at Linden Avenue in northeast Philadelphia. They were and still are for children only. Somehow I managed to catch a couple of sunnies and a bullhead. I was ecstatic! He was duly proud but still not interested for himself. That same trip I recall walking down to the Delaware River and seeing dead fish all over the place. Fishkills and pollution were of no interest to 10-year-olds of the time. All that stuck in my mind was their size and the smell!

I started reading the sports magazines about exotic fishing trips to the great rivers and lakes of this country and the world, and I dreamed the dreams of boys with fishing poles and bicycles. For my 12th birthday the uncle who fished finally came through with a real fishing rod and reel from Sears. It was from Sears so it had to be good! With pedal transportation I began to explore the waters near my home, which consisted of a lake in a township park and Pennypack Creek in Philadelphia and Montgomery counties. I knew nothing about seasons, creel limits or size restrictions. How could I? My father still didn't fish and the uncle who did went to the Jersey shore to catch flounder. I never caught much of anything anyway, but I didn't care. I had my rod and a 12-year-old's wilderness.

My father finally figured he had better find out about this fishing sport or he was never going to see much of his son. He bought his spinning outfit at Kelly's Korner, a discount store back in the Frankford neighborhood. Through his buddies at work, he found out that he had to buy a license and learned about some basic tackle.

A couple of times out to the stream and he was "hooked," as they say. He would get home from work around 4:30, and if I had managed to dig up some worms, it was off to the Pennypack for a couple of hours after dinner. He loved catching bullheads just as it got dark. We always tried to guess if the pull on the rod

was a catfish or a slimy old eel. Easter Sunday 1969 I caught my first trout—a 16-inch rainbow. As my father and I walked back to the car with the fish on the stringer and all the other anglers watching, I don't know who was prouder! Norman Rockwell couldn't have painted the scene any better.

Our picture-perfect home life was shattered when Dad had his first heart attack. Two-and-a-half packs a day, overweight, and bad eating habits seemed normal back then. Rehabilitation was also slower. To us kids it meant, after the hospital stay, that Dad would be home all day! We really never comprehended the seriousness of the situation.

While he was in the hospital he shared a room with a man who lived on the Delaware Canal in Bucks County, who made some suggestions for places to fish. As soon as the doctors let Dad drive again, it was time to explore. We discovered what was to be our dream fishing hole—Lock 12 on the canal at Lumberville. It was a young fisherman's perfect place. There was the canal and the Delaware River to fish, with easy access to both, and a footbridge to walk to New Jersey when the fishing slowed.

If you cast a minnow into the fast water at the lock race, there was a good chance of catching a smallmouth or large panfish. If you cast a crayfish there, it was a certainty. We would see other fishermen go down to the river and bring back a few. When they would ask about our luck, we would pull up the stringer and watch their jaws drop.

On opening day of bass season 1970 my father caught his limit IN THE CANAL! When the bass weren't biting, he would put out doughbait for monster carp and catfish. He enjoyed it so much, this non-fisherman, that we would come home from school and ask where Dad was. "Went fishing at the canal," Mom would answer. For a man who started fishing only a year or so before, I couldn't believe it. I was happy but at the same time bothered by the fact that he could go fishing while I had to go to school. He understood, though, and more than made up for it on weekends.

In 1971 a third heart attack took his life. He was 43. He left a wife and four children, the oldest, at 15 was I, the youngest, 1 1/2. Years later I grew to understand why he went off fishing by himself so much. To some, fishing is a profession, to some, a sport, to others, a hobby. To my father fishing meant a time he could be at peace with himself and his little bit of nature. A pleasant time to think about his family and life itself.

I have a family of my own now. My nine-year-old son fishes with me often and my five-year-old daughter is just getting started. The canal is being repaired, but we sometimes cross the footbridge to New Jersey and I tell them about the grandfather they never knew. Often I am saddened thinking about him not being around. He would have loved his grandchildren. But I take comfort in knowing he was at peace with himself. Fishing helped him find that peace, and for that I am forever thankful.

ANGLER



# THE BEST SMALLMOUTH BAIT

BY MIKE BLEECH



*Emerald shiner*

As my canoe glided around the Susquehanna River bend at Towanda, I could see a young couple ahead in the middle of the river. They were obviously having a good time splashing each other, which was the perfect thing to be doing in the 94-degree heat. But they were also doing something else. They were using a minnow seine.

"Whatcha' catchin'?" I called when I got close enough to hear a reply over the babbling riffle noise.

I guess they had not seen me coming because he looked up at me with that deer-in-the-headlights face. He hesitated briefly, then he smiled and answered, "Clippers."

I figured he referred to crayfish. And when he said, "best smallmouth bait you can get," it seemed I was right.

"Yeah," I said. "It's hard to beat crayfish for smallmouths."

"No!" he quickly retorted. "Hellgrammites!"

I tossed a minnow-shaped crankbait into likely looking places while I drifted, catching an occasional small bass. Several other anglers I passed, some wading, some in boats, were doing better. I spoke with them all, and they all were using hellgrammites.

Hellgrammites were a popular bait on the middle Allegheny River while I was a kid, but there everyone thought that



*Crayfish*

the best smallmouth bait was soft-shelled crabs, which we called crayfish. I do not recall learning that our crabs were really crayfish until high school biology.

Crayfish are certainly the most widely recognized great smallmouth bass bait. However, in many areas they ignore the soft-shelled stage.

How well I recall catching my first lunker smallmouth—they were lunkers then, before they became hawgs—while fishing at night in the Buckaloons Eddy. I collected soft-shells in the shallow water. Then after sundown the oldtimers came down the river bank to fish. We sat on boulders and watched our rods, which were set on forked sticks. I was taught to let the bass run with the bait, stop, and when they ran again to set the hook.

I knew this bass was special the instant I set the hook. Instead of rocketing toward the



Chuck Beatty with a 5-pound Lake Erie smallmouth bass.



*If it came to a vote, I would vote for soft-shelled crayfish, because sometimes it appears that smallmouths feed selectively on them. Yet I will continue to collect hellgrammites from a secret place in the Little Brokenstraw. If I am on the Juniata and my fishing partner has a bucket of stonecats I'll lip-hook one. I'll buy a bucket of emerald shiners now and then. I'll use riffle runners in the middle Allegheny, and I will not make fun of anyone who wants to use leeches or 'crawlers.*

moon as did the other bass we caught that night, it ran to the main channel and slugged it out in deep water. It weighed four pounds and measured 18 inches long.

After the completion of Kinzua Dam, the crayfish population declined in the middle Allegheny, and the popularity of using them as bait declined. Now, below the mouth of Conewango Creek, there are again abundant crayfish in the Allegheny.

Relatively few anglers use them as bait, though, and as far as I know none of the local bait shops sells them.

Down on the Juniata River folks know that the stonecat is the best smallmouth bait. It would seem that those sharp spines in the dorsal and pectoral fins would discourage predators from eating them, but it doesn't with smallmouths in the Juniata.

"Toss one into the water and you can see smallmouths make a wake for a hundred feet to get at it," I was told.

Well, I never yet saw that happen. But I admit that Juniata smallmouths have a taste for stonecats. The strange thing about this is that I have never had a bit of luck with stonecats outside the Juniata drainage. Maybe I just have not given them a fair try. Yet, there does seem to be a regionalism to the best small-

mouth bait. What is good in one place might not be worth a hoot in another.

I would never argue that emerald shiners are not the very best smallmouth bait up at Lake Erie.

Pennsylvania is blessed with several waterways that are inhabited by outstanding smallmouth bass populations. Serious smallmouth anglers all over the country know about the Susquehanna, the Allegheny and the Juniata. Still, none of these can compare with the number and size of the smallmouths in our 45-mile long section of the Great Lakes.

Probably as much because they are inexpensive, and the most common bait in bait shops, except for nightcrawlers, emeralds have become the best smallmouth bait.



**Riffle Runner**

And they most certainly are excellent smallmouth bait during the first few weeks of bass season when it is cool enough to keep emeralds alive in minnow buckets.

Like all of the "best" smallmouth baits, emerald shiners are native to the water where they are considered the best bait. This offers a valuable lesson about smallmouths that can even be applied to using artificial lures. Give them something they expect to see. Use natural colors. In my experience this becomes more important as the fishing gets tougher, and as fishing pressure increases.

Just as there is disagreement from place to place over which smallmouth bait is best, so do anglers in any one place disagree. Not surprising. Most of the better smallmouth waters are inhabited by more than one popular bait.

**Hellgrammite**



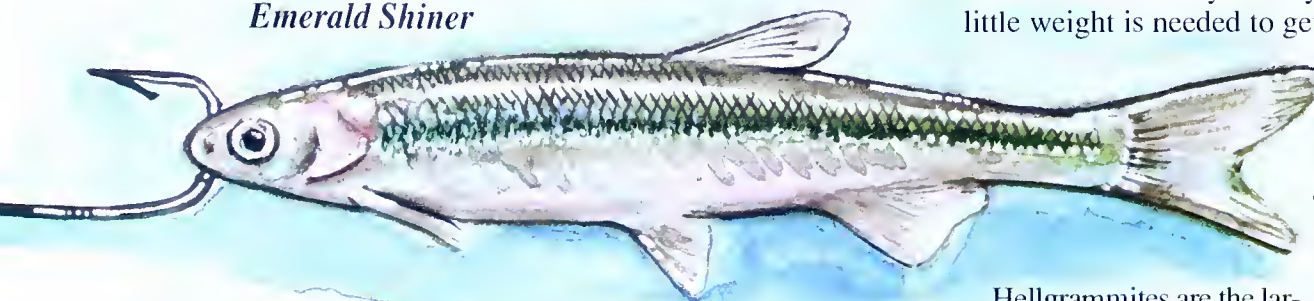


# THE BEST SMALLMOUTH BAIT



Anywhere you go you are liable to find anglers who prefer nightcrawlers as smallmouth bait. I doubt if 'crawlers are a major part of the smallmouth diet anywhere, yet, they definitely can be classed as a natural bait because they are frequently washed into bass habitat by hard rains. I suspect that the main reason many anglers like 'crawlers so much is because they are easy to collect and inexpensive to buy. And still, if you can keep other fish from getting to them first, 'crawlers are darn good smallmouth bait.

*Emerald Shiner*



Likewise, you will find some people who swear by leeches. They are not a traditional bait in Pennsylvania, having become locally popular only after they were touted by numerous national magazine articles as the new "super bait." Though significantly more expensive and harder to find in bait shops, leeches tend to last longer on the hook.

This list could continue a long way. Some anglers have other specific minnow preferences. Junebugs were a popular bait 30 years ago, and probably still are somewhere. Though more often thought of as trout bait, grasshoppers, crickets and other insects make fine smallmouth bait.

So what is the absolute best smallmouth bass bait?

Any of these baits I have mentioned might be the best. I believe that the best bait is not so much the bait itself as who is using it. But that sounds like something a politician would say.

If it came to a vote, I would vote for soft-shelled crayfish, because sometimes it appears that smallmouths feed selectively on them. Yet I will continue to collect hellgrammites from a secret place in the Little Brokenstraw. If I am on the Juniata and my fishing partner has a bucket of stonecats I'll lip-hook one. I'll buy a bucket of emerald shiners now and



*Stonecat*

then. I'll use ruffle runners in the middle Allegheny, and I will not make fun of anyone who wants to use leeches or 'crawlers.

## Emerald shiners

Emerald shiners are one of the most abundant and widespread minnows in the country, but in Pennsylvania they are confined to the western quarter of the state. They are major forage for gamefish at Lake Erie and the Allegheny Reservoir. Slender, shiny and as long as five inches, they can be found in huge schools.

Sometimes emerald shiners can be caught in minnow traps or drop nets, but most are bought at bait shops. They are relatively inexpensive, especially close to Lake Erie.

The major shortcoming of emerald shiners is that they are fragile. They do not survive any rough handling or warm water. Do not crowd them in a minnow bucket. Keep them cool and well aerated.

Hook emerald shiners through the lips or between the dorsal fin and tail. They usually struggle toward the surface, so a little weight is needed to get them down to the smallmouths.

A leadhead or jiggging spoon tipped with an emerald shiner is an excellent rig in deep water. In Lake Erie, smallmouths are often caught in 25 to 45 feet of water.

## Hellgrammites

Hellgrammites are the larval form of the Dobson fly, a large, four-winged insect that in adult form resembles the fearsome-looking hellgrammite. Males have large but harmless mandibles.



Nonetheless, when one lands on the back of your neck while you are night fishing, your first thought will be of vampires.

Hellgrammites can be caught by hand, searching for them by turning over rocks. But a minnow seine is much more efficient. Just disturb the bottom enough to dislodge the hellgrammites from their hiding places upstream from the seine, and they will drift into the seine. I have had the best success in gentle riffles, not swift whitewater, with a rock-and-gravel bottom.

Use a size 6 or 8 fine-wire hook to impale a hellgrammite through the "collar." The collar, actually a part of the body called the *thorax*, is located just behind the head. In smaller creeks and anytime the water is no more than about four feet deep, do not use a sinker. This ensures a natural drift. If you need to get the bait deeper, or you need more weight for casting, use just enough splitshot to get the job done. You do not want to anchor a hellgrammite on the bottom. Hellgrammites are not good bait for still-fishing on the bottom because they crawl under rocks. Keep them drifting.

Store hellgrammites in a covered container. Put enough water in the container to cover the hellgrammites. The container should not be airtight.

### Riffle runners

"Riffle runner" is a local name for the stream-line chub. Its range is spotty, occurring in Pennsylvania only in the northwest corner. Its habitat is moderate to swift current over a rock-and-gravel bottom.

Anglers who use riffle runners usually catch their own using a small barbless hook baited with a small piece of worm. They are typically four to five inches long. Store them in a minnow bucket, preferably kept right in the river so they are cool and well aerated.

For drifting, lip hook the chub. Use no weight or a light splitshot. For still-fishing in deeper water, hook the chub near the tail. This keeps it lively. Weight is not necessary unless you want to anchor the bait in one particular place.

### Crayfish



### Soft-shelled crayfish

Crayfish are abundant just about everywhere smallmouth bass live. The soft-shell stage occurs just after this crustacean sheds its shell. Like other shelled creatures, they shed their shells to grow. For a while after the shell is shed, the new shell that was developing beneath the old shell is soft. In this stage a crayfish is helpless because the muscles are attached to the shell. It cannot move quickly or use its

pinchers until the shell hardens.

Hook a soft-shell in the fleshy part of the tail. This avoids the vital organs, so it will remain alive.

In a current use just enough weight to keep the crayfish on the bottom. Or let it drift in the current with or without weight, depending on water depth. Keep it close to the bottom where smallmouths generally forage. Still-fish in calm water without additional weight. It takes a few seconds longer for the bait to sink to the bottom, but it is worth the wait.

You can keep soft-shells in a bucket of water, but they will quickly harden. Bait dealers store them in sphagnum moss in a refrigerator.

### Riffle runner



### Stonecats

Among the smaller members of the catfish family, stonecats and madtoms—most anglers cannot differentiate between them—are found throughout the state. On the Juniata River where they are popular, though they call them stonecats, anglers are actually using margined madtoms, a species common along the Atlantic states from New York to Georgia.

"The local boys mesh them together," Commission Area 7 Fisheries Manager Larry Jackson says.

They live in moderate to swift current over the rock-and-rubble bottom in rivers and creeks.

"Stonecats" can be collected easily with a seine. Just disturb the bottom up-

stream from the seine. They are heartier and easier to store than many baitfish. Still, keep their water cool and well aerated.

Lip-hook "stonecats." No weight is necessary because they head straight toward the bottom when they hit the water. In fact, you will have to move them frequently to keep them from getting under stones.







*Tohickon Creek, Ralph Stover State Park*

# Southeast Pennsylvania Smallmouth Streams

by Vic Attardo

Just before the current sharply accelerates and turns an abrupt corner into the wide river, a watery field of lawn-chair size rocks and broken tree limbs lies where the creek makes its last stand as a separate entity. Below that sudden twist few men—without goat hooves for feet—dare to tread. But in the more moderate current, one can wade from bank to bank with relative ease. And in this restrained but quirky water a mob of broad-backed, tiger-striped smallmouth bass lives by ambushing anything of consumable value that enters its home.

The hard-fighting smallmouth has many qualities, but shyness is not one of them. An aggressive predator, often at the

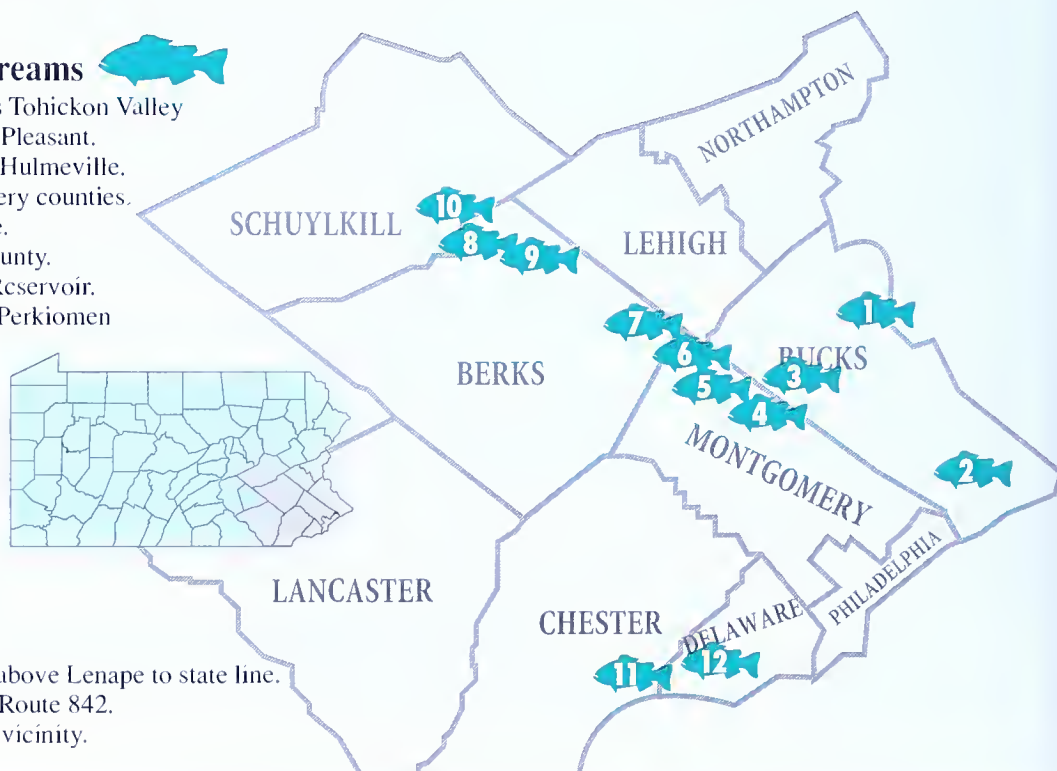
top of the food chain in a fast-flowing stream, the smallmouth feeds on a variety of creatures including, aquatic insects, crustaceans and small fish. Because it is not in its nature to pass up an easy meal, this hearty appetite plus a domineering spirit makes the smallmouth a cooperative target for the knowledgeable angler.

I have great respect for smallmouth bass and willingly forgo rushing to a short-lived hatch to spend the entire day with the more eager and numerous smallmouth. From early June to just after the leaves drop in the fall, a streambred smallmouth is my favorite target. And here, in the southeastern corner of the state, I have plenty of productive waters to try.

## Southeast Pennsylvania Smallmouth Streams



1. Tohickon Creek, Bucks County. Bucks County's Tohickon Valley Park downstream to the Delaware River at Point Pleasant.
2. Neshaminy Creek, Bucks County. Route 611 to Hulmeville.
3. East Branch Perkiomen Creek, Bucks/Montgomery counties. NE. Extension of the Turnpike to Schwenksville.
4. West Branch Perkiomen Creek, Montgomery County. Berks/Montgomery County line to Green Lane Reservoir.
5. Perkiomen Creek, Montgomery County. Upper Perkiomen Valley Park to Lower Perkiomen Valley Park.
6. Swamp Creek, Montgomery County. Faglesville Road to mouth at Route 73.
7. Manatawny Creek, Berks/Montgomery counties. Pine Forge area to mouth near Pottstown.
8. Sacony Creek, Berks County. Virginitville at Route 143 to State Game Lands 182.
9. Maiden Creek, Berks County. Lenhartsville, Route 22, down to Route 662.
10. Little Schuylkill River, Schuylkill County. Route 61 to mouth at Port Clinton.
11. Brandywine Creek, Chester County. Route 842 above Lenape to state line. Also West Branch from Coatsville, Route 30, to Route 842.
12. Darby Creek, Delaware County. Darby borough vicinity.





Indeed, within the range of thousands of anglers are miles of productive smallmouth fishing. Though the bass are rarely trophy sized, their numbers and fighting quality are an adequate trade. Within an hour's drive of Philadelphia and the Lehigh Valley, fishermen have about a dozen streams in the Delaware River drainage with notable smallmouth fishing. What's more, even though many anglers complain that the trout streams are too crowded and the boat launches too busy, stream smallmouth fishermen rarely feel hemmed in. Access can be a problem in some developed areas, but the resourceful sportsman can find plenty of roadside pull-offs to reach the water. Many of the southeastern streams have county or municipal parks along some sections, and once on the stream you are limited only to where your feet will take you.

Mike Kaufmann, Commission Area 6 Fisheries Manager, gives five of these streams a flat-out "good" rating. On his list—and mine—the Tohickon, Manatawny, Brandywine, the West Branch of Perkiomen as well as the main branch of the Perkiomen Creek, all rate highly. Comparing Kaufmann's assessment and my experience, others like the Perkiomen's East Branch, Sacony Creek, Maiden Creek and the lower portions of the Little Schuylkill River rate fair to good. Only the Neshaminy and Darby Creek get a lower rating, but I have spoken to one fisherman who says portions of the Neshaminy are a real sleeper, and he had pictures to prove it.

Throughout the Delaware drainage, smallmouth bass range from six to 13 inches in length, but I have found that the best-rated streams can push the envelope two to three inches. Anything over 15 inches in this area is something to write home about.

Early in the afternoon, either branch of Perkiomen or Manatawny creeks would be my choice for a solid outing. The waters of both streams contain all the nooks and crannies that smallmouth love and their deeper pools hold some of the largest smallmouth to be found in the southeast.

Viable smallmouth fishing on the Perkiomen extends from Green Lane downstream to Montgomery County's Lower Perkiomen Valley Park. Some of the best holding water is between Green Lane and Collegeville along Route 29.

An absolutely magical place to fish on the Perkiomen is above Spring Mount. One can launch a canoe or inflatable boat at the dam and paddle upstream into some deep, fertile water. There are big boulders in portions of this stream and smallmouth bass. Large rock bass and redear sunfish also find ample food and protection. Just watch out for people swinging from tree ropes or jumping off an abandoned railroad trestle into swimming holes that have been used for generations.

Another productive area is the East Branch of the Perkiomen below the town of Sellersville. Even though portions of the creek receive a spring and fall trout stocking, the lower East Branch, toward Vernfield and Route 63, is actually smallmouth/sunfish territory. This is a rapidly developing area, but the adventure-some angler should have long stretches of this shallow stream all to himself. One problem, however, is that anything over 11 or 12 inches in this stretch is likely to be a sucker or carp.

Working upstream from the Delaware River—a smallmouth factory in its own right—anglers can find a similar waterscape on Tohickon Creek up to Bucks County's Tohickon Valley Park. Starting at the park on the north side of the creek, the Tohickon reminds one of a Pocono trout stream with its fast water and short, deep pockets. But because the water warms quickly in the spring, this stretch is the home of numerous small smallmouth bass.



Downstream, the Tohickon widens considerably, taking on the character and quality of other fine smallmouth creeks of the area. By way of the county park, the Ralph Stover Park farther upstream, and a small memorial park on the south side off Route 32, the walking fisherman can reach some good water. The memorial park also provides access to the mouth of the Tohickon at the Delaware, a very exciting place to fish.

Even though its official nomenclature is that of a river, the Little Schuylkill above Route 61 at Port Clinton is more stream-like and can hold the larger bass that occasionally move up from the main Schuylkill River. To reach good water, disembark near the intersection of routes 61 and 895 and make your way, creatively, to the river. Here the Little Schuylkill is broad and shallow and flows along at a good tempo. In this zone you'll have to look for shoreline pockets and midstream eddies to find the fish. Below where the highway crosses the tributary, the channel narrows considerably and wading becomes a bit trickier as the stream parallels the road. But some quick-striking smallmouths live in the shadows of this boulder-strewn section, and because they don't have the luxury of scanning a fly or lure for every imperfection, you quickly learn whether or not they're on the feed.

One general rule for determining where to fish these southeastern streams for smallmouth bass is to locate the area where the Fish and Boat Commission stocks trout, and work around it. Most of these put-and-take creeks are unsuitable as hold-over waters because the temperature rises as they make their way south and east to the main rivers. In these unstocked sections smallmouth fishermen should spend the most effort.

One notable exception to the south and east rule is the Sacony Creek in Berks County. The Sacony receives a trout stocking from just above Kutztown and Route 222 to the village of Bowers. But from Virginville, at Route 143, upstream to State Game Lands 182 is an enjoyable, if somewhat sporadic, holder of smallmouth bass.



# Southeast Pennsylvania Smallmouth Streams

## Location

I succeed in smallmouth fishing much the same way as it is in today's business world. The first thing one should consider is location. Once on the stream I search for the holes, pockets and stone fields that make up good smallmouth holding water. In most cases, I'm seeking a moderate current and a place where the fish can hide. Often these sites can be quite subtle in appearance.

Some of the keys I look for include a minor color change from light to darker water, a calm area beside some white froth or a flat, mirror-like eddy along a quicker run. In these locations I most often locate a bass.

One of the bigger mistakes anglers make is to wade in too far too fast. Most fishermen take great care in working the opposite bank from where they entered the water. But the first bank that should be worked is the one at their feet.

One of the neater tricks I use is to fish back toward where I started. Say, for example, you are up to your thighs in the center of the stream and have been casting to the far bank, taking some good fish. When you think things have quieted down behind you, turn to your "home" bank and rework that side of the stream. You'll be amazed to find that a fish or two you probably disturbed entering the creek has slid back to its regular haunt and is ready to attack your lure.

It was a quirky occurrence, but I still remember the three-pounder, one of the biggest fish of last fall, that came out of the Tohickon next to a rock I had climbed over 20 minutes before.

## Method

My preferred method for taking stream smallmouth, particularly in the low water conditions of late summer and early fall, is with a fly rod. But I am not adverse to drifting a large, juicy hellgrammite into a smallmouth's lair to raise an uncooperative fish. It's amazing how quickly they become interested!

In the past few years I have dropped some weight—that is, the weight of my fly rod. I once followed conventional wisdom and boomed my fly across the water with an 8-weight rod, but I have since reduced myself to a 5-weight for this small stream work. Not only is the fight better, the thinner line also makes for easier line control. I reserve the 7-weight and 8-weight rods for windy days and I wouldn't work the brawling Delaware with anything less than the seven. But for streams whose average width is some 60 feet, the lighter rod is more enjoyable.

Because these streams are often low and their waters very clear, I prefer long leaders of nine to 11 feet, including tippet. Some fly rodders might be asking which leader size one should use on a 5-weight to turn over the weighted flies used to fish smallmouth bass. The answer lies in the weather.

If I'm lucky enough to be fishing a breezeless evening, then a 4X tippet does the job. But if the wind is blowing in my face, I need a little extra umph on the end of my line, which a 3X and a shorter leader nicely supplies. Sometimes with the light leader the fly curls under the last few inches of tippet when it drops to the water. I find this situation acceptable, if somewhat annoying, because I know I get more strikes on a lighter line. Remember, on truly breezy days, the 7-weight rod comes out of the truck.



## Fly selection

Fly selection for stream smallmouth bass doesn't have to be too sophisticated. Olive and black Woolly Buggers, plus rubber-legged Bitch Creek Nymphs, black and brown stonefly and hellgrammite imitations, Muddler Minnows, and generic streamers, all in sizes 6 and 8, plus small popping bugs like the Sneaky Pete, sizes 6 in chartreuse or white, are all producers.

But my "don't leave home without it fly" is a white Goat Hair Minnow, a cousin of Shenk's White Minnow. Unlike Shenk's excellent creation, made with rabbit or Arctic Fox tied with a dubbing loop, I bind the goat hair or lamb's wool to the hook shank. The thick underfur is packed around the hook but not spun. I also tie the rounded body of my fly right up to the eye of the hook, which gives it the "walk-the-dog" action of a Zara Spook. Shenk ties a traditional thread head on his fly.

An important factor in fly selection is the type of water I plan to fish. Fortunately, most of the streams I work are perfect for the styles and sizes noted above. But when I begin at the top of a shallow riffle, a big weighted fly might be too much. Then I go to a trout-size fly, like a number 12 Gold-Ribbed Hair's Ear with light or dark shading. The water at the head of a fast run usually won't hold the largest fish, and I can work a smaller fly through the lip of a riffle much slower than a larger fly. By taking a small fish or two, I can also get a quick read on whether I should be using bright or neutral flies for my day's work. When I get to where the bigger bruisers live in the middle of the run, I pretty much know what I should be feeding the fish in terms of color.

All of my flies are weighted except, of course, the popping bugs and some floating Muddlers. Muddlers that I wish to sink I tie with wool heads—a very effective fly, I might add.

As for fly lines, my choice is equally simple. Because these waters are relatively shallow, a floating line is all I ever use. My sink tips and sinking lines are reserved for the big rivers.

## More on location

The part of the run where the current begins to lose some velocity and gains some depth is the area I call "sweet spot"—borrowing a phrase used by fly tiers to denote the best area on a feather to find quality hackles. The angler who wants consistent success in smallmouth bass fishing should learn to identify the sweet spot and give it the most attention. Often it can be recognized as that part of the run where the rocks seem more spread out and the stream widens ever so slightly. The head of the riffle may contain the most obstructions and have a quicker current; the end of the run is usually shallow or contains a narrow channel before entering a pool; the sweet spot is somewhere in the middle and in a good stream holds a bass around every rock.

After giving such advice it might seem contradictory to say that the angler should not ignore any likely water in a stream, but that's the way it is in smallmouth fishing. Even the shallowest tailouts can be good places to fish when smallmouth bass are chasing minnows against a stream bank.

Even though many anglers complain about the crowded conditions on the famous trout streams and others wait on weekends for a position on the ramp, stream smallmouth bass anglers rarely have those worries. The southeastern corner of the state is full of people but its smallmouth streams are only full of one thing—smallmouth bass.



# SMART

## Angler's Notebook

by Carl Richardson

### Caddis Flies

Caddis flies are aquatic insects found in nearly all of Pennsylvania's waters. Some caddis species are at home in small mountain streams, while others prefer the depths of our large rivers and lakes. Like butterflies and moths, caddises go through complete metamorphosis. Use the letters *ELPA* to help remember the four stages in complete metamorphosis: Egg, larva, pupa and adult.

#### EGG

Each egg is very small and round. One egg is about the size of the period at the end of this sentence. Depending on species, the female lays the eggs in clusters of 30 to 300 eggs. The clumps stick to the bottom and hatch in two to four weeks.

#### LARVA

Caddis larvae look much like worms with six legs. The larvae produce silk, and many use it to build protective cases. They make tube or purse-shaped cases out of grains of sand, sticks and other vegetation. One species makes a case that looks like a snail shell. Some species carry the case. Others attach it to rocks. Larvae crawl on the rocks eating algae and other plants. A few species build silken nets to filter food out of the water. In many Pennsylvania streams there is a green-colored caddis larva that is a predator. It does not build a case.

#### PUPA

Nearly a year after it hatches, the larva constructs a cocoon. The larva enters the cocoon and becomes a pupa. A pair of wings develops while inside the cocoon. After about two weeks in the cocoon the pupa appears and swims to the surface. For each kind of caddis this happens at the same time each year.

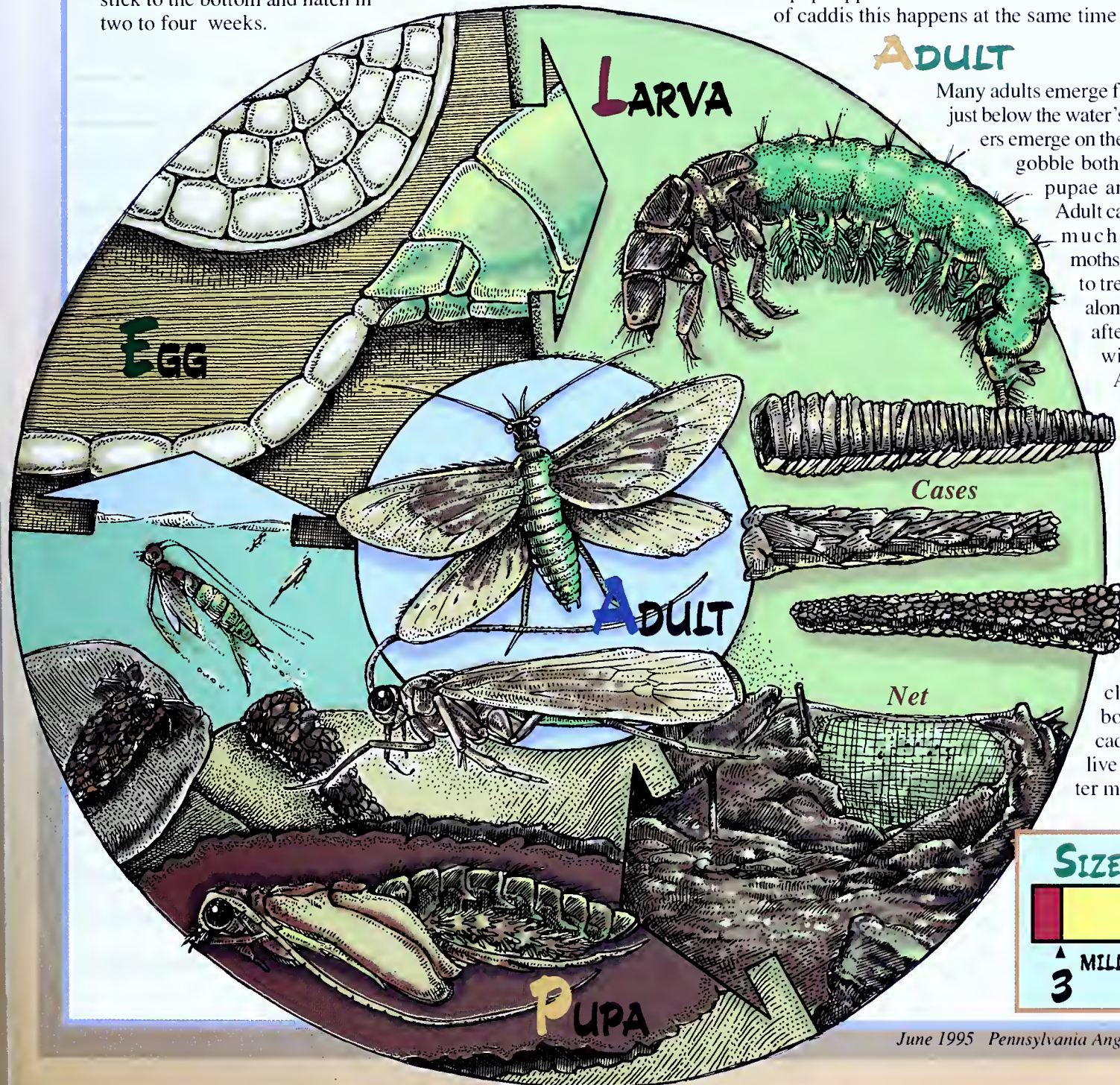
#### ADULT

Many adults emerge from the pupae just below the water's surface. Others emerge on the surface. Fish gobble both the emerging pupae and the adults. Adult caddis flies look much like small moths. The adults fly to trees and bushes along the water and after several days will mate there. After mating, the female flies her fertilized eggs to the water. Depending on the species, the egg clusters are deposited on the surface or the female swims the clusters to the bottom. Adult caddis flies often live for months after mating. **ANGLER**

Cases

Net

#### SIZE RANGE







Topwater lures are prime because river bass feed in shallower water more often than their lake-bound cousins.



# Three Rivers **Bass Fishing**

by Darl Black



The morning fog clung to the hilltops, keeping the river shrouded in a damp mist. I tugged at the collar of my fleece pullover trying to cover my chilled ears before making the next cast.

Pitching the tube jig toward the stone lockwall, I followed it with the rod tip as it bounced along the bottom. It stopped unexpectedly before reaching the boat. In automatic mode I snapped the rod upward. The weight on the zigzagging line indicated a respectable fish, but it wasn't until it started climbing for the surface that I knew for sure it was a smallmouth.

Then, in one of those unexplainable twists in fishing, the bass spit the jig at the side of the boat. But not before I had a clear view of the smallie.

"Gosh," I stammered to my fishing partner. "Did you see the size of that bass? Must have been close to four pounds! A river smallie of four pounds!"

Had we been fishing a rural section of a pristine river, I would not have been surprised. But we were on the Allegheny River within sight of downtown Pittsburgh.

Ten years earlier I had caught football-size 12- to 14-inch largemouths while fishing a tournament on the Monongahela near Ten Mile Creek. Having just enjoyed a tussle with a big smallmouth, and reflecting back to that day on the Mon, I scratched my head and wondered why it took me a decade to schedule this fishing trip to the heart of Golden Triangle.

### Three Rivers perspective

Three Rivers bass fishing is hot! There is no other way to describe it. I'm not going to argue it's the best bass fishery in the state, but it is a far cry from 30 years ago when little more than carp and bullheads lived in the severely degraded water.

Three Rivers is the term applied to the navigational pools of the Monongahela, Allegheny and Ohio rivers in the greater Pittsburgh area. The slow-moving Mon flows north from the coal mining region of West Virginia. Cutting a southward path through rolling hills, the Allegheny River has a steeper gradient yielding a faster flow. The meeting of the two rivers gives birth to the Ohio River, which meanders northwest before turning southwest.

At one time steel plants, refineries and related industries lined the shores of the Mon and Ohio with both rivers used as dumping grounds for waste. The Allegheny was not exempt from industrial and mining pollution problems, either. In addition, all three received more than their share of improperly treated sewage. For years the rivers in the Pittsburgh vicinity were considered dead waterways.

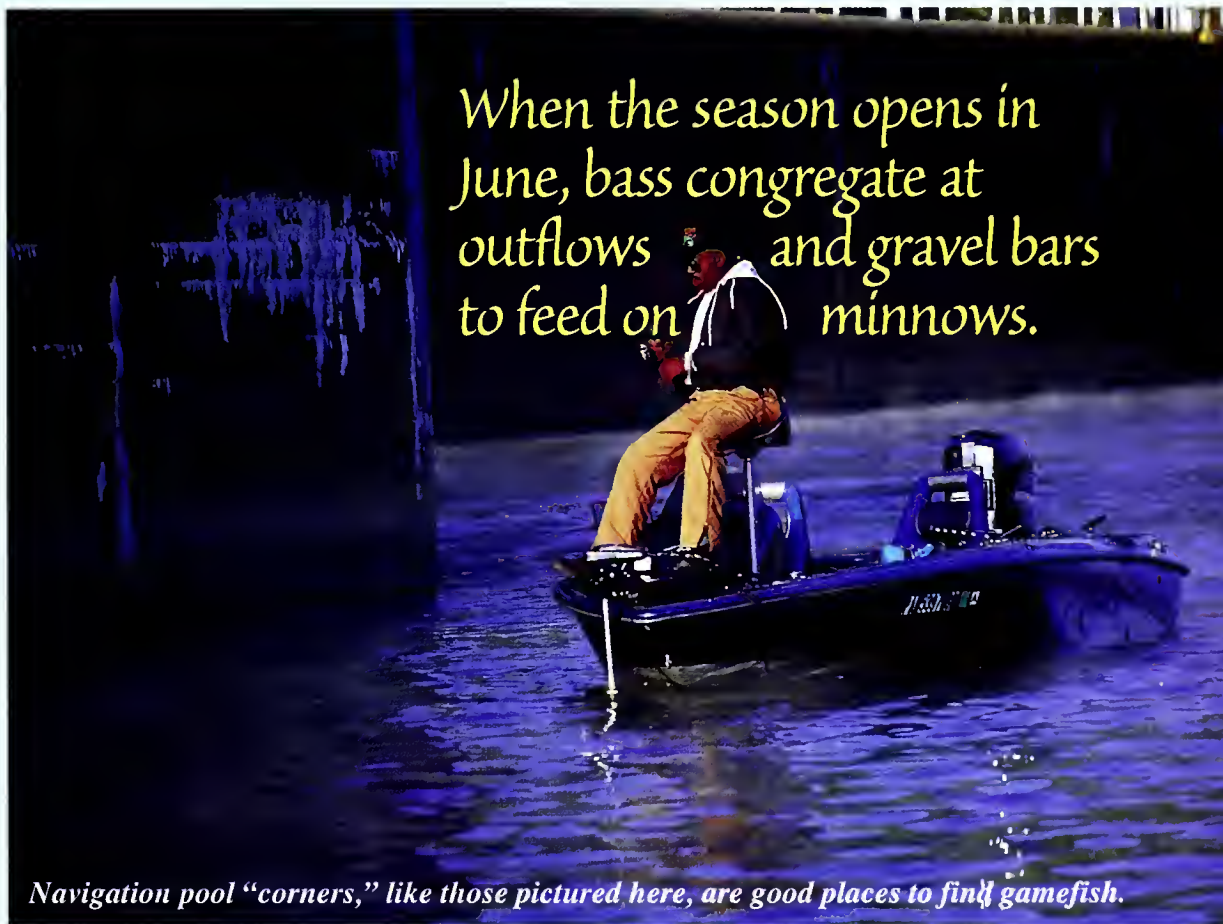
Things change—sometimes for the better. Fortunately, that was the case for Three Rivers, which has undergone a remarkable improvement as a result of clean water legislation. Clean enough to drink directly from the river? Hardly. But enough to support increased baitfish and gamefish populations.

"Fabulous—that's how bass fishing is described on the rivers these days," says Ernie Pate, Jr., a river basser for over a de-

cade. "The bass population increased steadily in the 1980s. Smallmouths dominate, but there are some largemouths up the Mon. Spotted bass are advancing up the Allegheny and Mon from the Ohio. However, spots aren't as consistent year to year as the smallmouths."

On weekdays when fishing pressure is light, Pate often manages to catch and release 25 to 30 bass. The bass typically range from nine to 14 inches, with larger ones occasionally caught.

"All three rivers have come a long way in the last 10 years," says Nick Mellon, chairman of the Keystone Bass Association and a Coast Guard certified guide on the Three Rivers. "Bass catches have improved tremendously, and that has increased the fishing pressure. Now, instead of area anglers running to distant lakes, they stay around home to fish the rivers. Plus, we see more and more anglers from outside the area viewing Three Rivers as a bass fishing destination. But that's okay. There



*When the season opens in June, bass congregate at outflows and gravel bars to feed on minnows.*

*Navigation pool "corners," like those pictured here, are good places to find gamefish.*

are more than 300 miles of navigation pools to investigate."

Even though Mellon, Pate and many others have played catch and release with Three Rivers bass for a dozen years, a handful of anglers discovered the developing gold mine over 20 years ago.

One summer afternoon in 1972, Red Bailey and a friend launched a johnboat in a back channel of the Allegheny near Harmarville. They made their way upriver to the lowhead dam at Lock 3 before starting to fish.

"I had a Big O tied on because it was the hot new lure," recalls Bailey. "We started drifting downriver. I immediately hooked a huge smallmouth in the swift current. Following what seemed like an eternal battle, I landed the fish. We didn't have scales, but it weighed between five and six pounds. Although it was bigger than any smallmouth I had ever caught, I released the trophy. I haven't caught anything that large since—anywhere in the state, including Erie."

Shortly after that, Bailey's friend stumbled into a few large-



# Bass Fishing

mouth bass on the Mon near Elizabeth. In a flash the first bass club in western Pennsylvania was born—the Golden Triangle Bassmasters. This small group had the rivers pretty much to themselves for several years until other serious bassers uncovered the expanding fishery. “River bass fishing has only gotten better over time,” says Bailey. “But I don’t know if I’ll ever see another six-pounder in the river!”

## Biologist’s assessment

As Commission Area 8 Fisheries Manager for the southwest district, Rick Lorson’s responsibilities include the Mon, Ohio and the lower Allegheny.

“Bass are doing well in Three Rivers, but as with any river fishery, environmental conditions come into play and may drastically affect the future population. Spawning success in rivers is based largely on water flow. High water or floods can wipe out a year class. Drier years are better from a spawning aspect for both bass and forage fish. When we get large year classes like 1989, 1991 and 1993, they show up as improving bass fishing for three or four years down the road.”

The Allegheny has a higher density of smallmouths than the Ohio or Mon. Even though the water is better than it was a quarter-century ago, the Mon continues to suffer from some mine drainage and silt. Yet, samplings undertaken by Lorson in the lower three pools of the Mon in recent years show a good smallmouth

population. Spotted bass are now found in all three rivers, but are mainly concentrated in the Ohio.

When asked what happened to the exceptional largemouth fishing in the Mon during the early 1980s, Lorson offered this explanation.

“Pockets of largemouths have always existed in the Mon because the navigational pools are longer, the water is slower, and the water temperature is warmer compared to the Allegheny and Ohio. During the early 1980s, the Three Rivers were experiencing an increase in baitfish. Largemouths were already in the Mon, so they were able to reap the benefit of the rapidly expanding baitfish populations. Therefore, football-size largemouths were prevalent for a few years. But as smallmouths, white bass, sauger and walleyes migrated up the Mon in the following years, largemouths had to compete with additional species for the same forage. The Mon is more in balance now.”

And what about the forage in the rivers? Is it the same for all three rivers?

Lorson says that each river is a slightly different environment that supports different baitfish. The Mon is primarily gizzard shad and emerald shiners. Bluntnose minnows and spotfin shiners hold the third spot. On pools 3, 4 and 5 of the Allegheny River, it’s bluntnose minnows, spotfin shiners and log perch, and to a lesser degree gizzard shad and emerald shiners. On the Ohio, some years gizzard shad dominate and other years it’s emerald shiners.

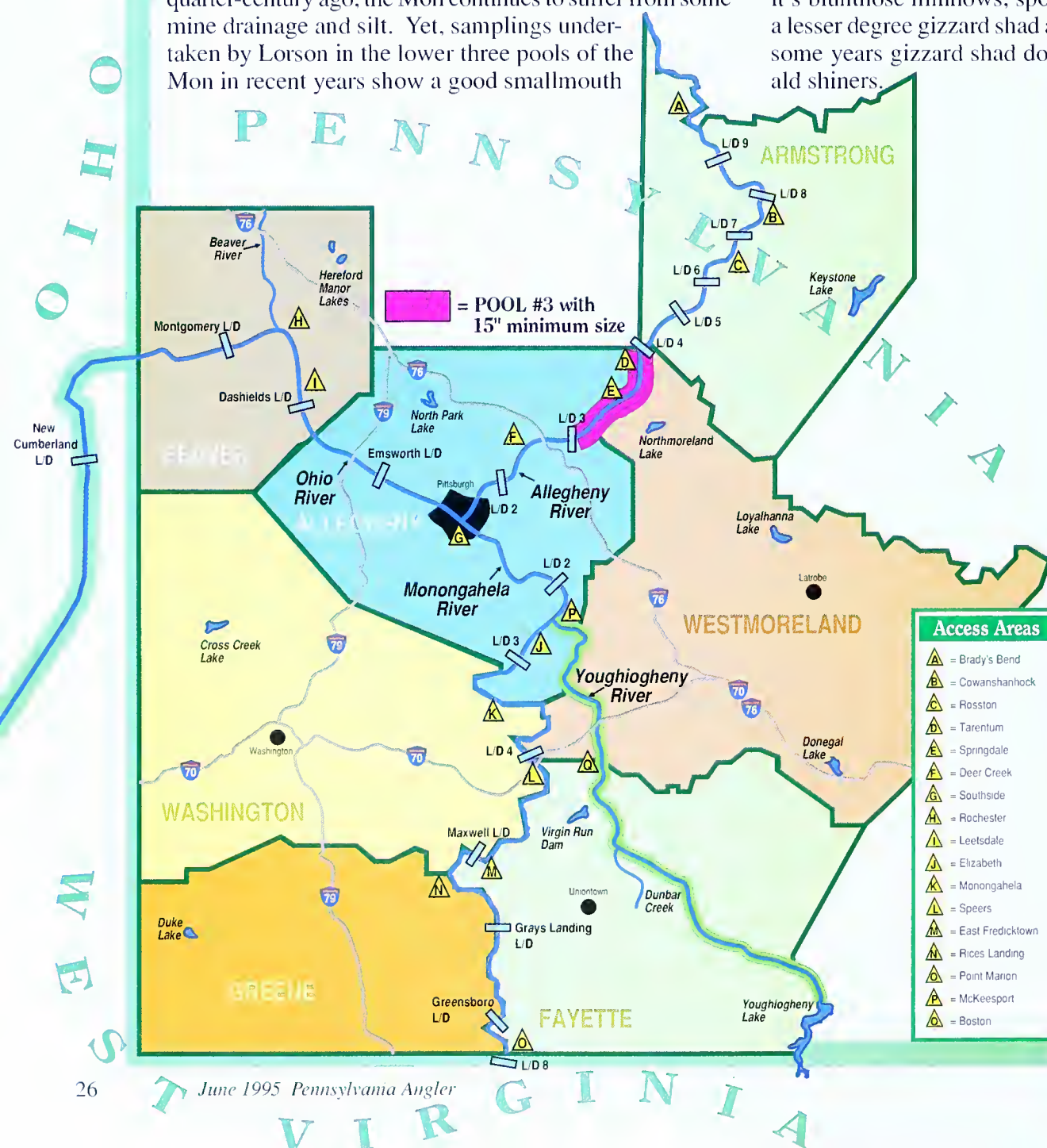
## Finding Your Way on 3R

For anyone not intimately familiar with the greater Pittsburgh area, finding access to the rivers can be an intimidating experience. If you don’t know exactly where you are going, it will turn into an urban driving nightmare with boat in tow.

The following items are absolutely necessary:

(1) A Pennsylvania road map and a detailed greater Pittsburgh road map. (2) The Commission’s *Guide to Public Fishing Waters and Boating Access*, which provides the best detail of each access areas on the river. The cost is \$2.12 postpaid including state sales tax. Contact the Commission Magazines/Publications Section, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.

(3) River charts. Detailed nautical charts may be obtained from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1000 Liberty Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15222; phone 412-644-6872.—DB.





Baitfish variety contributes to sustained bass growth. If the entire river system were dependent on one baitfish species, that could spell trouble if a year class of that species failed.

### To catch a bass

Pate, Mellon and Bailey all agree—their preferred lure presentation for Three Rivers bass is topwater. For these anglers, surface baits account for a significant number of bass every season. Topwater lures are prime because river bass feed in shallower water more often than their lake-bound cousins.

Most Three Rivers anglers claim the best topwater bite is late September into mid-October. But that doesn't stop knowledgeable anglers from churning up the surface whenever their experience tells them there is a high probability of success with topwater.

Every morning that Bailey finds himself on the river, he throws a chugger until the sun is directly overhead. Under certain weather conditions Mellon tosses either a buzzbait or chugger all day long. Pate uses chuggers to cover expanses of water looking for groups of active bass. All anglers suggest a topwater lure be tied on one rod at all times for the unexpected "jumps." Jumps occur when a group of bass attacks a baitfish school on the surface. This may happen anytime from June to mid-October.

There are, of course, times when bass simply do not come to the surface. Here are additional tips from our expert river rats on lure presentations for those situations.

According to Mellon, when the season opens in June, bass are congregated at outflows and gravel bars to feed on minnows. "They are really stacked up at key sites," says Mellon. "This can be a good time for topwater. But if that does not work, try swimming a grub or four-inch worm.

"During the first weeks of August, bass can be found in moving water on current breaks," says Mellon. "This is the time to fish a crankbait or perhaps a spinnerbait."

"If I can't trigger strikes with topwater, I switch to tube jigs or four-inch worms," says Pate, who finds it hard to put down his favorite chugger. Soft-plastic jigs and worms are excellent for targeting objects that create a resting site for bass. Besides typical current breakers like rock piles and log jams, navigational rivers feature dock pilings, mooring posts, metal waffle walls, bridge abutments and lots of corners.

Rigged weedless, soft-plastic baits are good for probing cover. "I tend to find spots in heavier cover than smallmouths," says Pate. "Smallmouths are more likely to relate to rocks than spots."

When the topwater bite isn't happening, Bailey usually switches to a four-inch worm. He prefers to fish the worm on a jighead, instead of a slip-sinker Texas rig. A leadhead provides a better vertical drop for the worm, as well as better control in current situations.

Creek mouths are among Bailey's favorite haunts. Each tributary forms an outwash delta. This bar serves as the dining table for baitfish schools. With bait present, bass are close at hand.

"Here's a surefire tactic when nothing else seems to be working," says Bailey. "Head upstream to the area below the next lowhead dam and fish an in-line spinner in the tailwaters. Use a heavy blade so you can feel it thump on the retrieve. This is the best guarantee for smallmouths in the Three Rivers."

Fishing is not without drawbacks on Three Rivers. Although there are some public and private access ramps, few are as convenient or spacious as ones typically found on other lakes and rivers around the state. During pleasant summer days, travel on the river is encumbered by heavy boat traffic. Small alumi-

num fishing boats and low-profile bass boats run the risk of being swamped by wakes from barges and cruise ships.

And to move from one navigational pool to another by water, there are the locks to contend with. Learn what is required to lock through ahead of time, and keep in mind that recreational boaters receive the lowest priority.

Lowhead dams (an extension of each lock) present another danger. During boating season buoys mark the danger area. Obey them. Maintain a proper lookout at all times.

Even with drawbacks, Three Rivers is a waterway you do not want to overlook. It's part of Pennsylvania's bass fishing.

ANGER

## Locking Through on 3R

The lock-and-dam system on Three Rivers is managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Government and commercial craft have top priority. Sport anglers and recreational boaters are on the lowest rung. It's not a first-come, first-serve deal. An approaching tug contacts the lockmaster by radio and lower priority boats must wait until the commercial traffic arrives and is locked through. With multiple barges, this may take well over an hour.

To lock through, small boats must have at least 100 feet of rope and boat fenders to protect against the lock walls. Each boat occupant must wear a PFD.

Small-craft operators signal the lockmaster with a pull of the rope at the end of the lockwall. After signaling, back off several hundred feet to await light signals. A red light means wait. An amber light means approach the lock under full control—not full throttle. Green means enter the lock chamber.

The boat rope is passed to a lock worker on the top of the wall. The worker loops the rope around a stanchion and drops the tag end back to the boat. Large boats require two ropes.

Boat operators must maintain control of the ropes as the water level goes up or down. A short blast means that you have permission to leave the chamber.—DB.

## 15-Inch Limit

Commencing in 1995, Pool 3 on the Allegheny River will be under special Big Bass regulations, which includes a 15-inch minimum size.

According to Lorson, the Big Bass regulation was established on Pool 3 as an experiment to see if the smallmouth population will respond to its full growth potential.

"Pools 3 and 4 have the highest density of smallmouths in the lower Allegheny River," says Lorson. "However, my surveys provided evidence that few smallmouths were making it over 12 inches and fewer yet over 15 inches, this despite good water quality and ample forage.

"Because of good boat access, Pool 3 is one of the most heavily fished pools on the river. It appears the 12-inch minimum size is resulting in high harvest. Therefore a higher minimum size was placed on this pool to see how the smallmouth population responds."

Will the 15-inch size be expanded to the entire Three Rivers area?

"We are waiting to see what kind of fishery response we get on Pool 3 before applying it to other pools. I do not anticipate applying the regulation to every pool, but there may be other pools where it is applicable, too," Lorson says.—DB.





WCO William C. Carey

## Carey Named Officer of the Year

The Fish and Boat Commission has named Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) William C. Carey its 1994 "Officer of the Year." Carey, a seven-year Commission veteran, received the honor at the recent Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference.

Carey's district contains portions of four counties, including sections of Pike, Wayne, Lackawanna and Monroe counties. He is responsible for patrolling Lake Wallenpaupack as well as nine approved trout waters, numerous wild trout streams, and three state park lakes. Because of the diverse nature of the district and the numerous recreational opportunities it offers, there is no so-called "slow season."

Bureau of Law Enforcement Director Edward W. Manhart praised the award winner's exceptional attitude and approach to his multi-faceted duties. "Bill Carey's efforts go above and beyond the normal call of duty," Manhart said. "Carey diligently serves the best interests of the angling and boating public."

Carey is no stranger to awards. He was nominated twice before for the "Officer of the Year" award. Recognized earlier for his volunteer work with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, he was named the Game Commission's Deputy Game Protector of the Year in 1984.—*Dan Tredinnick.*

## Penns Creek: One of a Kind

Penns Creek, eastern Centre County, is known for its large brown trout, healthy insect populations (especially the Green Drake hatch), ample public access, and gorgeous scenery. But Penns Creek is now recognized for another reason. A stretch of water from Coburn downstream to the catch-and-release area below Swift Run in Poe Paddy State Park is now a one-of-a-kind special regulation area.

The regulations assigned to this area are essentially the current Trophy Trout regulations, but without tackle restrictions. From the opening day of the season through Labor Day, anglers can use the rod, reel and bait of their choice to harvest two trout per day with a minimum size of 14 inches. In addition, anglers are permitted to pursue other species in accordance with standard inland regulations. However, possession of a signed trout/salmon stamp is necessary to fish in this area regardless of the methods used or species pursued.

While many anglers prefer fewer sets of regulatory exceptions, this area holds promise of possible expansion to other areas. If this area is successful, it will offer anglers maximum recreational potential while protecting trout. Of all items in a special trout regulation package, tackle restrictions are often the root of controversy. That element has been removed in this program, and if anglers prove its success, we may see these regulations on other Commonwealth waters.—*WCO Brian Burger, Centre County.*

## New State Record Sucker

The state record for sucker has been broken twice since the beginning of the year.

John Cernick, Pittsburgh, was first to break the old record with his catch on February 1. His fish beat the old state record by 6.2 ounces—weighing 11 pounds, 7.2 ounces and measuring 31 1/8 inches long with a 17-inch girth. Cernick was fishing the Allegheny River, Venango County, when the brute attacked his jig.

Cernick's record was shattered on March 14 by a fish caught by Endeavor resident Troy Bemis. Bemis's fish, taken from the Allegheny River in Forest County, tipped the scales at a whopping 12 pounds, 9 ounces. The fish, caught on a worm, was 30 + inches in length with a girth of 18 1/4 inches.



Lehigh River Shad

The first American shad to enter the Lehigh River through the Easton fishway during the 1995 migratory run was caught—caught on camera, that is. The Commission documented the shad passing its video monitoring equipment at 6:16:30 p.m., April 20. The season's inaugural shad was spotted during a review of Commission video tape. The tapes also showed two more American shad passing through the fishway between noon and 1 p.m. on April 21.

The passage of American shad through the Easton fishway is a crucial step toward re-establishing the species to its native spawning grounds in the Lehigh River basin. Migratory fish passages in two Lehigh River blockages—the Easton and Chain dams—were first used by shad during spring spawning runs last year, shortly after the fishways opened. Some 87 American shad were recorded at the official observation station at the Easton Dam in 1994. American shad enter the Lehigh from the Delaware River, the only Pennsylvania river system currently supporting a viable shad fishery.

Restoration efforts are also under way on the Susquehanna River system.

The American shad is the largest member of the herring family. Adults commonly reach four to eight pounds. The silvery fish are prized for their fighting ability and excellent flesh and roe. American shad are anadromous—that is, they spend most of their life in the ocean, but return to freshwater to spawn, with migratory runs taking place in coastal rivers each year from Florida to Newfoundland.

Declining American shad runs in the Commonwealth prompted the formation, in 1866, of what today is the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Although the scope of the agency has greatly broadened since that time, the restoration of American shad populations in Pennsylvania waters is integral to the agency's mission.



## Special regulations on Kettle Creek

I am 77 years old and an avid fisherman. I recently read the "Survey of Trout Fishing in Pennsylvania" in my November 1993 *Angler*. I agree with the majority of people who were interviewed for the survey. I selected my fishing site because it was close to my camp and in a nice environment.

My two favorite waters are Kettle Creek and Cross Fork Creek. However, I am now semi-disabled and unable to fish most of Cross Fork Creek, which is restricted to fly fishing. My question is, if I am not able to fish bait in that stream, why are other fishermen allowed to fish flies in streams such as Kettle Creek? This seems like discrimination against older people who cannot move around as well to get to these areas.

I will continue to fish in Pennsylvania, and hope you will continue to do the good job of keeping the fishing at its present high level.—*Art Fogel, Moorestown, NJ.*

The regulations on catch-and-release waters state that angling may be done with barbless artificial lures only (including spinners, flies and streamers) and all trout caught must be immediately returned to the stream. The 5.4-mile fly-fishing-only area on Cross Fork Creek is indeed more exclusive with respect to tackle restrictions. However, we currently have an area on Cross Fork Creek proposed for the new Selective Harvest program. This will enhance the current wild trout fishery by implementing a larger minimum size limit on wild brown trout and reducing the daily creel limit for all trout species. If this program is approved, it would include management under the artificial-lures-only concept and would allow more anglers to enjoy this fine fishery.

**The majority of the Kettle Creek drainage is managed under conventional regulations, which permit a variety of tackle types. The reason behind gear restrictions on special regulation areas is to avoid the high hooking mortality rates that are associated with the use of bait. Managing special regulation areas under an artificial-lures-only concept gives more anglers the opportunity to participate, as compared to fly-fishing only, while maintaining the low hooking mortality rates necessary for a quality fisheries.—R. Thomas Greene, Coldwater Unit Leader.**

## Commission Signs Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative

The Fish and Boat Commission has signed a Statement of Mutual Intent supporting the Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative. The Statement of Mutual Intent outlines concerns shared by the states of Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia with improving streams that have been polluted by drainage from abandoned coal mines (acid mine drainage—AMD). The non-binding agreement pledges increased cooperation and partnerships among federal, state and local governments and other private and public groups.

A major goal of the clean-up plan is to increase the exchange of information and eliminate duplicate efforts among local, state and federal government agencies working on AMD projects.

The Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative traces its roots to 1977 when President Jimmy Carter signed the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. The law was designed to prevent future coal mining from creating AMD problems as well and to set in motion the reclamation of old and abandoned mines. As an outgrowth, the Clean Streams Initiative began as a broad-based program to eliminate AMD.

The major culprit in acid mine drainage is abandoned deep or surface mines that discharge millions of tons of sulfuric acid into streams each year. The streams that typically drain these mines have their bottoms stained with a pre-

cipitate called "yellow boy." Yellow boy is an orange by-product of the reaction that takes place in the strip mine spoils or deep mine shafts.

Whenever iron sulfide (pyrite or "fool's gold") is leached by water, sulfuric acid is produced. The acid and iron are then transported from the mine site to streams by groundwater. The reduced iron is oxidized by the oxygen in the stream to form yellow boy.

Highly acidic waters do not support any appreciable amounts of aquatic life communities, except for a few very hardy species. Yellow Boy also coats stream bottoms and causes a smothering affect by filling in the small spaces between the rocks and gravel normally inhabited by fish food organisms.

AMD is the single greatest source of pollution in Pennsylvania's waterways: attempting to address all of the Commonwealth's problems would be an immense task. Rather than taking a statewide approach, Pennsylvania has embarked on a watershed strategy. The Little Toby Creek watershed in Elk County has been proposed as the state's priority watershed because of the potential to restore a trout fishery use.

Currently some \$13 million in federal funding is being sought for the Clean Streams Initiative in the first year. This money would be distributed to all Appalachian coal states to fund work on individual priority projects.—*Dan Tredinnick.*

## 1995 Conservation Leadership School

The Penn State Conservation Leadership School is now accepting applications from students between the ages of 15 and 18 for its two-week residential programs. Sessions emphasize field-based, hands-on learning, group problem-solving, and environmental management. The curriculum involves active participation in environmental management, resource assessment, and regenerative conservation methods.

The school is held at the Stone Valley Recreation Area and uses the educational resources of Penn State. Students work in small groups under the guidance of a faculty member. The curriculum includes

courses in watershed management, citizen action, basic ecology, land-use planning, alternative energy supplies, environmental risk assessment, and forest management. Living accommodations include four-person platform tents with cots, heated showers and restroom facilities, complete meal service and all educational needs. The 1995 sessions are: Session I, July 2 through July 15; session II, July 16 through July 29; and advanced session, August 3 through August 12.

For complete information or an application, contact: Jack Sinclair, 102 Wagner Building, University Park, PA 16802; 814-863-0229.

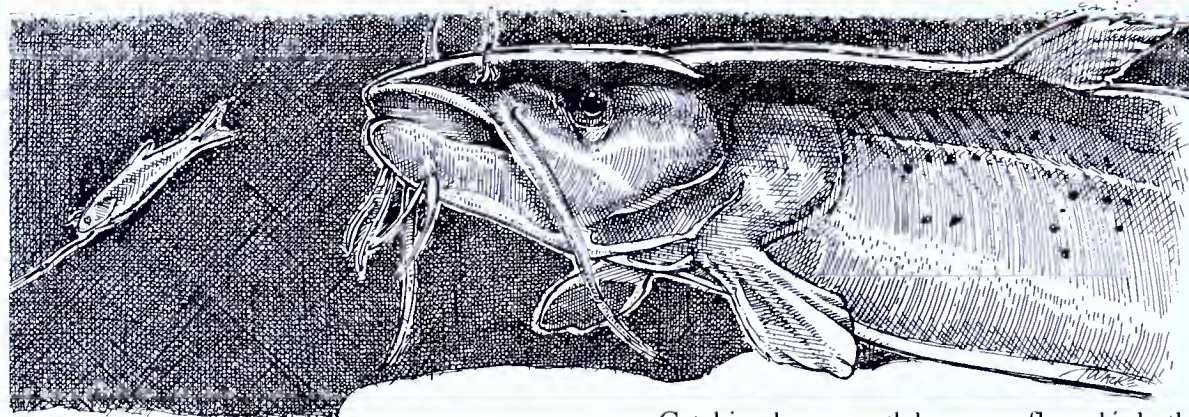


## Commemorative Patch

This patch marks 125 years of the Commission's management of bass. The full-color patch is 3 1/4 inches across and 4 3/4 inches tall. The patch sells for \$5 each postpaid including state sales tax. Send checks for money orders (please do not send cash) to: Publications Section, PA Fish and Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000. Quantities are limited.



## Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Bryan*



The best time to catch big catfish is at night. If you're fishing from the shore of a lake, pond or stream, cast your bait out and anchor your rod in the mud, or prop it on a forked stick. Gently reel the slack out of the line so you have a "tight line" to your bait. If the night is clear, watch your rod tip for movement and then set the hook. If it is too dark to see your rod, tie a small bell to the tip-top and listen for the signal to set the hook.

Some of the year's best stream and river walleye fishing occurs during the spring spawning run. Concentrate your efforts on rapids, eddies and below dams. The deeper water adjacent to undercut banks is also a good bet in spring.

Fly-fishermen love to practice those long, rod-ripping, double-haul casts that can put a fly on the far side of a stream. However, if you want to become a better fisherman, it is much more important to practice making short, accurate casts. Take your rod for a walk around your yard, stopping often to make a cast at a flower, a rock, or the trunk of a tree. The more accurate you become, the better chance you have when faced with a difficult cast on a stream.

Catching largemouth bass on a fly rod is both fun and a fine challenge. When picking out a suitable rod, keep in mind you will be casting large, bulky flies to sometimes very big fish. A good all-round choice is a 9-foot rod, rated for an 8-weight line. This rod gives you the power you need to cast big flies and land big fish.

One of the most famous and effective bass lures is the plastic worm. When fishing a worm, cast it out and let it sink to the bottom. Begin your retrieve by moving it along the bottom, "feeling" the different humps, rocks, logs and other pieces of structure. A slow retrieve in this manner is often irresistible to bass, so be ready for the telltale "bump" a bass makes when it picks the worm off the bottom.

When faced with every trout fisherman's dream, a pod of rising fish, don't make the mistake of "flock shooting," or casting randomly in the middle of them, hoping for a take. Pick out the nearest trout to you and cast to that fish first. If you cast to a fish farther out, you run the risk of spooking fish and putting them all down. Work the closest fish until you catch it, or it stops rising. Then move to the next fish in the group.

*illustration- Ted Walke*



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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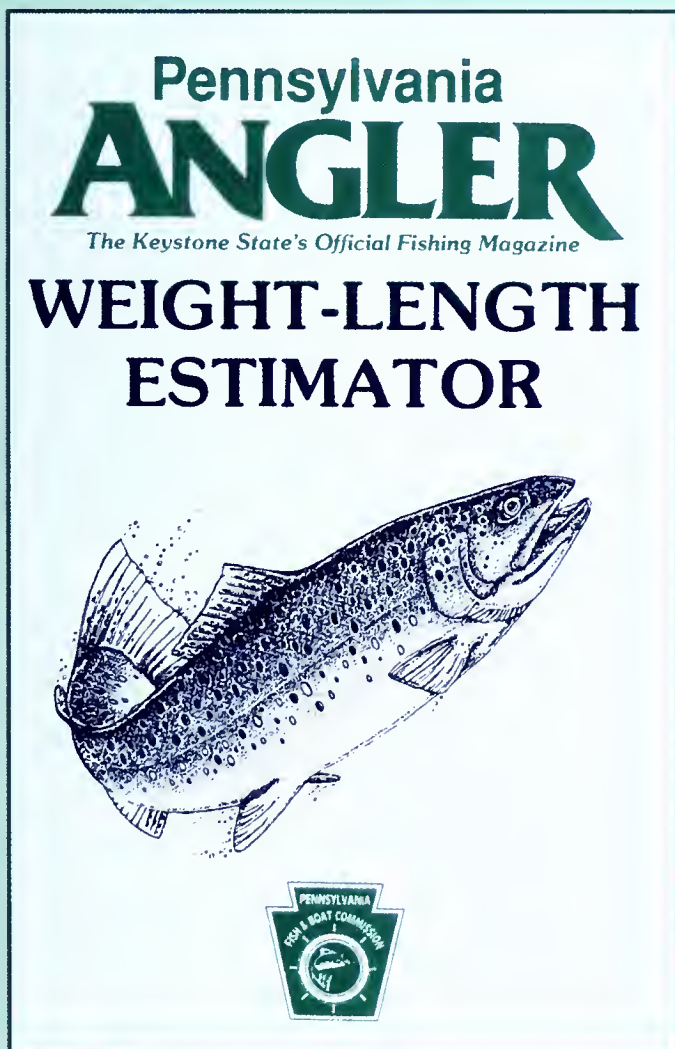
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# *Straight Talk*

## **Lake Erie's Steelhead Fishing— Good to Excellent**

Steelhead fishing opportunities in the Pennsylvania waters of Lake Erie are rated from good to excellent by 73 percent of the anglers, according to a survey conducted by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission during the period April 1993 to April 1994.

The only opportunity to fish for steelhead in Pennsylvania streams is on the tributaries to Lake Erie, which are noted for their seasonal salmonid runs. Stocking of steelhead in Lake Erie waters by the Commission was initiated in 1961 when 15,000 fingerlings were released. The original steelhead stocks were obtained from the West Coast. In 1968, after three years of no stockings, the 3-C-U Trout Association resumed the steelhead program by planting 3,400 steelhead smolt (juvenile steelhead) into Lake Erie.

In recent years, the Fish and Boat Commission has stocked an average of 990,000 steelhead annually, with 3-C-U contributing an average of 59,000 additional fish.

The steelhead smolt stocked by the Commission in Lake Erie are produced at three of our hatcheries—Fairview, Linesville and Tionesta. In 1993, these three hatcheries produced and planted 1.1 million steelhead in Lake Erie at a cost of \$780,000. Most stockings are conducted in the spring with smolt 6 inches to 8 inches in length.

The Commission has been stocking these larger smolt since 1987 to reduce the mortality induced from waterfowl as the smolt take up residence in the tributaries or from walleyes as they move into Lake Erie. The smolt are planted as a put-grow-take steelhead fishery. Nominal stockings also occur in the fall with fish that have outgrown other juvenile hatchery steelhead. A few weeks after the smolt have been released, they move into Lake Erie. Then, after a period of one to three years in the lake, they return as sexually mature adults to the tributaries where they were originally stocked.

Ten of the 17 tributaries to Lake Erie that have steelhead runs are stocked with steelhead. At least 10 of these 17 tributaries have wild steelhead present. Four other tributaries—Godfrey Run, Trout Run, Orchard Beach Run and a portion of Crooked Creek—are designated as nursery waters where fishing is not permitted.

These nursery waters are protected against fishing because they are collection points for brood stock and will ensure future sources of eggs for our three hatcheries.

The study showed that from April 1993 to April 1994 more than 76,000 angling trips totaling 286,000 fishing hours were directed at steelhead. This accounts for approximately 25 percent of the total angler hours of effort on the Pennsylvania waters of Lake Erie and its tributaries for all species by all anglers. Steelhead are the most popular sportfish that anglers pursue. Most angler efforts directed at steelhead occur in September and October. However, the largest monthly catch of steelhead



**Peter A. Colangelo**

*Executive Director*

*Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*

is in April, despite the regulation that closes tributaries to steelhead fishing for a period in April.

An estimated 68,000 steelhead were caught by anglers during the survey period. About 34,000 of the steelhead caught were harvested, which means that about 50 percent of the steelhead caught were released.

Shore anglers caught 92 percent of the total catch in or at the mouths of the tributaries during spawning runs. The remaining 8 percent were caught by boat anglers. The majority of the returning stocked steelhead adults were three years old and averaged 23 inches in length.

It was interesting to note that 62 percent of the steelhead trips to Lake Erie were non-Erie County residents during the study period. This was a complete reversal of a survey that was conducted from 1981 to 1982, when 64 percent of the steelhead trips were by Erie County residents. There is no question that the steelhead fishery in Lake Erie has had a very positive economic effect on Erie County.

If you are interested in learning more about the outstanding steelhead fishery in Lake Erie, please write to Mr. Del Graff, Director of the Bureau of Fisheries for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (450 Robinson Lane, Bellefonte, PA 16823-9620). If you are interested in additional information about the 1993-1994 steelhead survey, contact Mr. Charles Murray or Mr. Rickalon Hoopes of our Research Division (1225 Shiloh Road, State College, PA 16801). The information I used in this article came from a report that they prepared on the Lake Erie steelhead fishery.

On behalf of everyone in the Commission and the anglers of Pennsylvania, we thank the 3-C-U cooperative nursery for their outstanding and dedicated partnership efforts in the steelhead fishery program.

Why not plan a steelhead fishing trip to Lake Erie this fall? Odds are that you will find your angling efforts to be enjoyable.

*Peter A. Colangelo*



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**Pennsylvania  
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*The Keystone State's Official Fishing Magazine*

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*This issue's front-cover largemouth bass was photographed by Wally Eberhart.*

**East Coast Trout Management and Culture Workshop**

For three days last May 31 through June 2, some 200 biologists, fisheries managers and fish culturists met at Penn State in the American Fisheries Society's North-eastern and Southern divisions East Coast Trout Management and Culture Workshop II. The "II" designation means that the first meeting, held at Penn State in 1992, was very successful, so participants decided to hold a similar event.

The Commission was well-represented. Bureau of Fisheries Director Del Graff delivered an opening-session paper on balancing resource and user demands. Marty Marcinko, Chief of the Division of Warmwater/Coolwater Production, was the workshop chairman. Dennis Ricker, Chief of the Division of Trout Production, chaired the fish culture sessions. Dick Snyder, Chief of the Division of Fisheries Management, moderated one of the fisheries management sessions. Training Officer Bill Kennedy presented a paper on the organization of the Commission's Fish Culture School. Tom Cochran, fisheries biologist in the Commission's Division of Research Pathology Section, presented a paper on regulation and use of therapeutics in fish culture in our hatchery system. Bill Frazier, Mary Ellen McMahon and Debbie Spicer, all Commission Bureau of Fisheries employees, handled conference registration.

Participants in these kinds of meetings take away new and better information and procedures on trout management and culture in the eastern U.S. We anglers and conservationists ultimately benefit in better management of our fisheries resources, more efficient trout production, and more effective use of funds.

—*Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.*

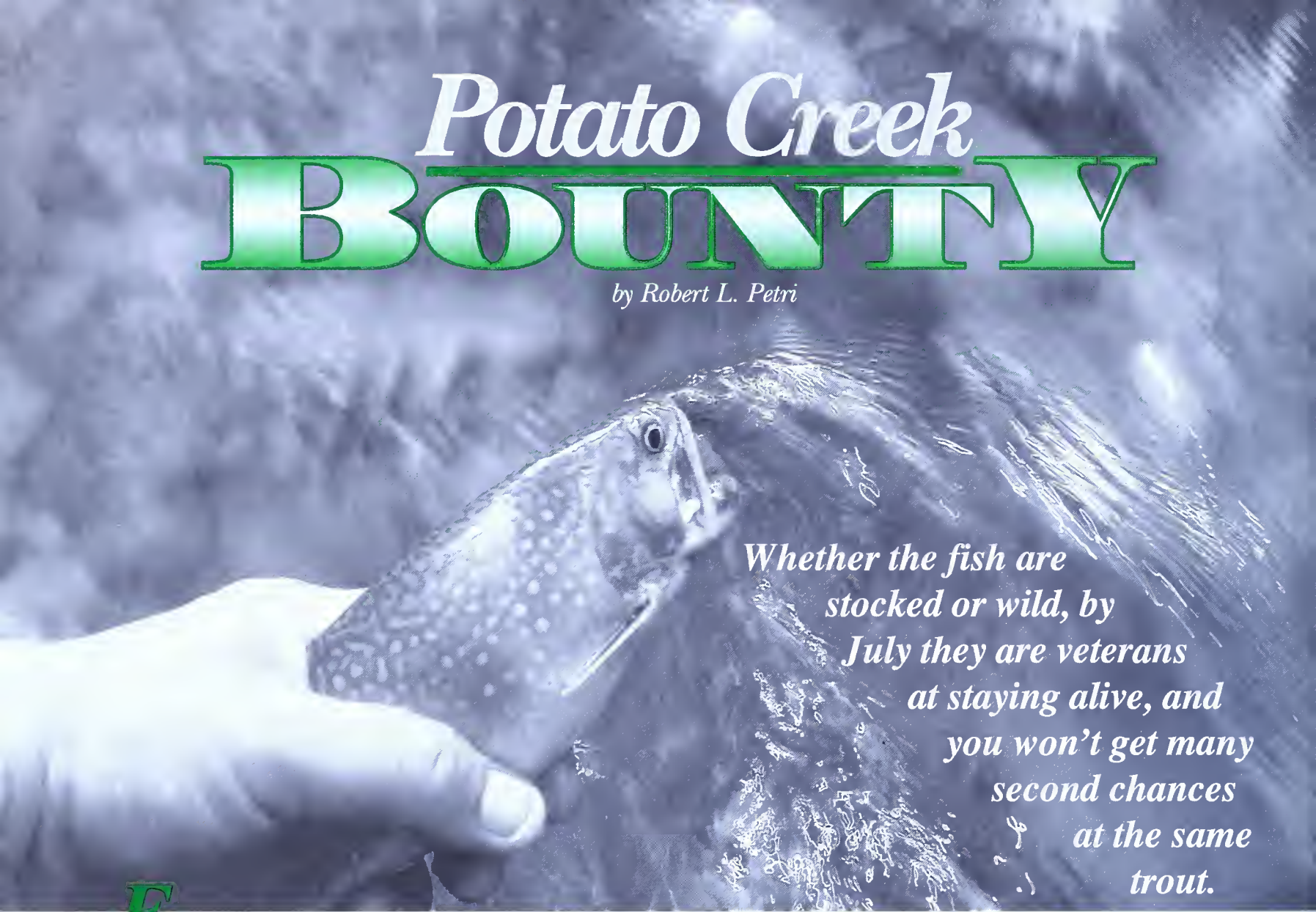
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# Potato Creek BOUNTY

by Robert L. Petri



*Whether the fish are  
stocked or wild, by  
July they are veterans  
at staying alive, and  
you won't get many  
second chances  
at the same  
trout.*

**E**astern McKean County in northcentral Pennsylvania is a land of notable geographic contrast. As you travel north from the narrow, heavily forested valleys of the southern portion of the county, you can watch the land gradually open up before you as the valleys widen, the forests recede and the landscape becomes dominated by small farms, boggy lowlands and the signs of Pennsylvania's oil industry, both past and present. Through it all flows the waters of Pennsylvania's largest tributary to the upper Allegheny River, Potato Creek.

Like Pine Creek in Lycoming County, French Creek in Crawford County and a host of other Pennsylvania waterways in their regions, Potato Creek is a defining stream of its area, rich in the colorful history of this part of Pennsylvania. Even though much of this history tells of the role the stream played in the commerce of the area, there is also a rich legacy of angling excellence here that stretches well back into the early 19th century. Tales of five-pound brook trout that once swam in the waters of Potato Creek, and of market anglers who exploited the abundant brookies of the Potato Creek watershed to the point of near extinction, are part of the story of a Pennsylvania that used to be. The evidence is everywhere to be found in the old newspapers and museums of the region.

While all things pass and change, today's Potato Creek can still lay claim to a good portion of the heritage of fine fishing of years gone by. In the upper reaches of the stream, there is excellent trout fishing. The numerous cold Potato Creek tributaries offer a mixed bag of angling opportunities over wild and stocked trout. The lower reaches of the main stem are home to small-mouth bass and a scattering of other species such as muskies

and assorted panfish. Despite development, misuse and other indignities at the hand of man over the decades, the Potato Creek watershed is still a very worthwhile fishery. Let's take a closer look.

## Beginnings

The Potato Creek story begins in extreme southeast McKean County tight against the drainage break between the Allegheny and Susquehanna watersheds. Here, in the middle of State Game Lands 30, the East Branch of Potato Creek begins its northward journey toward the Allegheny. Abandoned coal operations contribute substantial amounts of acid mine drainage to the tiny stream in this section, rendering the East Branch unsuitable for stocking trout.

As the East Branch emerges from the game lands and comes within view of PA Route 46 about 15 miles south of Smethport, it picks up the clean, cold flow of Havens Run, which enters from the west. Havens Run is a very small, high-quality stream where good numbers of wild brook trout supplement the brook trout stocked in the stream before opening day, and twice during the regular season. Stocking begins at the junction with the East Branch of Potato Creek and continues upstream for approximately two miles, to the confluence of Pigeon Hollow. Almost all of Havens Run flows through the confines of State Game Lands 30, so access is excellent. Generous amounts of shade keep the stream cool all summer long, and the fishing can be good here even in the hottest weather.

Havens Run contributes enough clean water to the East Branch to allow for trout stocking to begin where the two streams come



together. Potato Creek is stocked from this point for the next 15 miles to the junction of Marvin Creek at Smethport. This section of Potato Creek is classic mountain freestone water with good numbers of fairly deep pools and numerous undercut banks. These upper reaches of the stream also stay fairly cool throughout the season, and offer the best summer trout fishing the main stem of Potato Creek has to offer. Rainbow, brown and brook trout are stocked here preseason and once after opening day.

Trout can be found in the summer throughout the entire stocked section of Potato Creek, but July causes much of the lower portion of the stream above Smethport to experience significant warming. Under these conditions, look for trout around the mouths of the numerous small, cold Potato Creek tribs, and in the springholes that occur regularly in the main stream itself. Remaining trout from the spring stockings will gravitate to these areas in search of water temperatures in their comfort level.

A better bet for summer trout action is to fish the stocked Potato Creek tributaries, which are numerous. Including Havens Run, eight different tribs to the main stem are stocked with trout, offering a variety of water types and sizes to choose from.

## West Branch

The West Branch of Potato Creek joins the main stem near the tiny village of Betula just off PA Route 46 about 12 miles south of Smethport. Brook and brown trout are stocked in the West Branch from the mouth upstream a little over three miles to the junction of the West Branch and the South Fork of the stream. Some brook and brown trout reproduction takes place here, but the majority of fish come from the annual stockings. SR2002 parallels the lower reaches of the West Branch, and offers good access. The upper 1.5 miles of stocked water lie beyond a gate at the end of the road, creating an opportunity for anglers interested in hiking in to a more secluded section of the West Branch.

Just a mile or so below the junction of the West Branch, Brewer Run adds its flow to Potato Creek. This small stream is stocked with brook and brown trout from its mouth upstream just over two miles. In addition to its preseason stocking, Brewer Run receives one additional stocking in May to supplement the fishery. A modest population of native brookies also calls Brewer Run home. Most of Brewer Run is accessible only on foot, because only a single bridge on Township Road 362 near the mouth spans the stream.

Red Mill Brook enters Potato Creek from the west about four miles downstream from Brewer Run. Red Mill is a relative newcomer to the ranks of stocked Potato Creek tributaries, receiving its first stockings in 1992. The stream is stocked with brook trout from the mouth upstream approximately four miles to the Sergeant/Norwich Township line. State Route 146 provides easy access to the stocked section of Red Mill Brook.

At the village of Colegrove, about three miles downstream from Red Mill Brook, Colegrove Brook joins Potato Creek from the east. Slightly under two miles of this small waterway, from the mouth upstream to the first significant forks in the stream,

are stocked each year. Like Brewer Run, access to the upper sections of Colegrove Brook is walk-in only. The only bridge on the stream is located on Route 46 very near the mouth.

## Marvin Creek

Marvin Creek, the largest and most productive of the Potato Creek tributaries, joins the main stem just upstream from Smethport. A significant waterway in its own right, Marvin Creek nearly doubles the size of Potato Creek where it enters, and changes the character of the main stream.

Hamlin Lake is a small impoundment on Marvin Creek just above the mouth of the stream. The lake is stocked with trout, and in the summer, it adds a significant amount of warm water to Potato Creek, completing the stream's transformation from trout fishery to warmwater fishery.

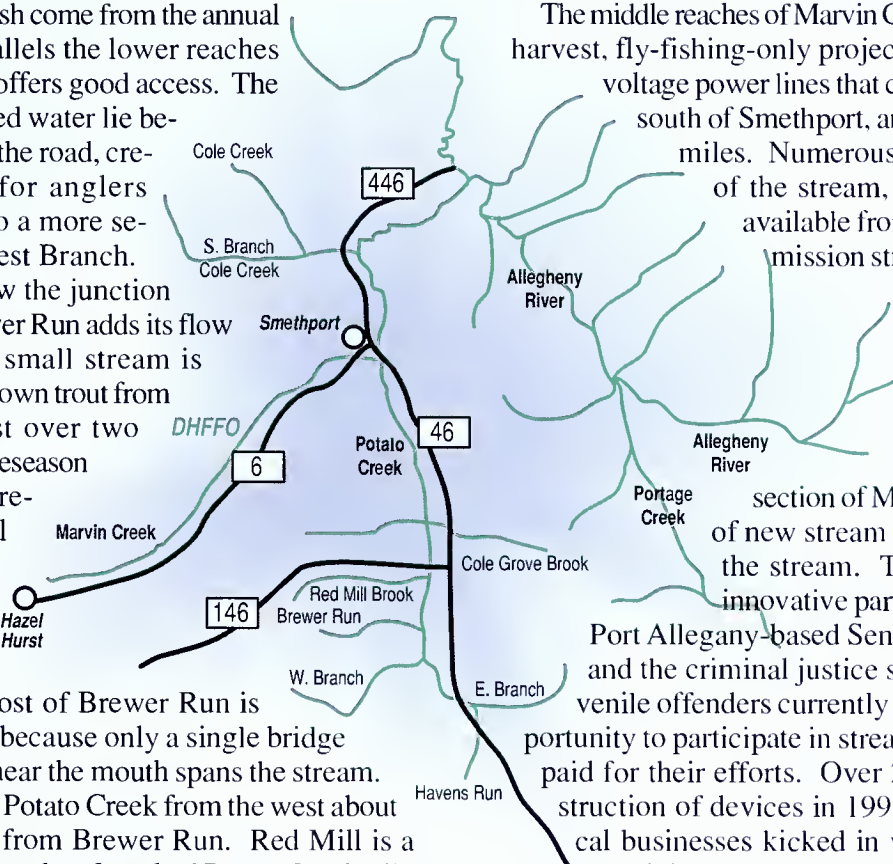
Ten miles of Marvin Creek, from Hamlin Lake upstream to the village of Hazelhurst, are stocked with all three species of trout before opening day and three times during the season.

The upper portion of Marvin Creek from Hazelhurst downstream to the vicinity of Township Road 347 is a small to medium-sized waterway flowing through an open, agricultural valley. Stocked brook and brown trout dominate the fishery here, along with a scattering of wild trout of both species. Access is good throughout this section. U.S. Route 6 parallels the Marvin Creek valley fairly closely all the way to Smethport. An abandoned railroad grade follows the north bank of this portion of Marvin Creek, offering walk-in access to the sections that flow away from the highway.

The middle reaches of Marvin Creek are highlighted by a delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only project, which begins near some high voltage power lines that cross the stream about three miles south of Smethport, and continues downstream for 1.1 miles. Numerous points of access to this section of the stream, as well as parking spaces, are available from Route 6. Fish and Boat Commission stream surveys conducted by Area 2 Fisheries Manager Ron Lee and his staff indicate a very good holdover of stocked brown and rainbow trout all through the summer in these project waters.

Visitors to the delayed-harvest section of Marvin Creek will notice a number of new stream improvement devices all along the stream. These devices are the fruit of an innovative partnership between the Smethport/Port Allegany-based Seneca Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the criminal justice system in McKean County. Juvenile offenders currently on probation are offered the opportunity to participate in stream improvement work, and then paid for their efforts. Over 2,000 hours went into the construction of devices in 1992 alone on Marvin Creek. Local businesses kicked in with donations of construction materials, transportation and an array of other items from safety glasses to pizza. The results have been a true win/win situation where some of the young men involved have been able to work off portions of their fines and court costs, and Marvin Creek received some much-needed habitat improvement.

Cole Creek and its South Branch are the northernmost of the stocked Potato Creek tributaries. The main stem of Cole Creek enters Potato Creek along State Route 446 about five miles north of Smethport. A little less than two miles of this moderate-sized





stream, from the junction with the South Branch to the mouth, are stocked annually with about equal amounts of brook and brown trout.

The South Branch of Cole Creek is a smaller, more isolated stream than the main stem. Averaging about 15 to 20 feet wide, it is characterized by long, shallow riffles and short, deep pools. The South Branch is stocked with brook trout for a distance of about 2.5 miles from the mouth upstream to the vicinity of Bingham Pump Station. Township Road 348 off PA Route 46 near Farmers Valley runs tight beside much of the lower section of the South Branch to provide access.

As is the case with most of the Potato Creek tributaries, most of the stocked section of the South Branch flows through privately held land. Please be a courteous angler, and respect the rights of the landowner.

## Small-water smarts

The summer trout angler looking to succeed on the main stem of Potato Creek and its tribs would do well to follow the basic rules of small-water trout fishing that apply almost everywhere. Your approach to the water is as important as which bait, fly or lure you use. Trout in small streams are by nature constantly on guard against predators like mink, raccoons and herons, and all it takes is a shadow to send them under the bank and out of the picture. Stay low and go slow when you approach the water. Approach undercut banks from the high or deep side of the stream, and stay as far back from the bank as you can when you deliver your cast. Remember that any trout you can see more than likely also sees you.

Whether the fish are stocked or wild, by July they are veterans at staying alive, and you won't get many second chances at the same trout.

Redworms and live minnows fished on four-pound or lighter line serves the bait angler well. Small spinners and 1/32-ounce or smaller jigs fished upstream in the deeper pools and pockets also take fish. Fly fishermen can put their confidence in attractor dry fly and nymph patterns like the Adams, Elk Hair Caddis and Hare's Ear and Whitlock's Fox Squirrel Nymph. With few exceptions, sizes 12 through 16 are your best choices. Except in the larger, slower pools, you seldom need to taper your tip-pet any finer than 4X.

## Warmwater action

Once it passes under the Route 59 bridge east of Smethport, Potato Creek becomes a slow and brooding waterway, framed by alders and sycamores as it winds along the final 14 miles of its journey to meet the fledgling Allegheny River near the village of Larabee. The stream follows a looping, twisting course

through a maze-like progression of boggy lowlands and side channels in the

Smethport to Larabee section.

The fishing in these lower reaches of the stream is a warmwater cornucopia of sorts. According to Area 2 Fisheries Manager Ron Lee, the stream does not have outstanding populations of any one species of gamefish in this section. However, it does have variety. The closeness of this portion of Potato Creek to the Allegheny River allows the migration of a wide variety of warmwater fish from the river into the stream. Smallmouth bass are the most numerous of these fish, having established a resi-

dent population. However, your next cast could bring a strike from almost anything. Muskies and northern pike are present, as are panfish and the occasional walleye and largemouth bass. Over the years, some truly respectable muskies have been taken from the slow, mud-banked pools of lower Potato Creek.

The Potato Creek watershed is a fascinating place from both a historical and an angling perspective. You could spend the morning catching wild and stocked brook trout, have lunch while you drive 20 miles downstream, and then spend part of your afternoon firmly attached to the business end of a 15-pound musky. Now that's variety.

ANGLER

## The "Boondocs" Program

The same manpower and ambitious goals that made the Juvenile Offenders/Trout Unlimited cooperative venture such a success on Marvin Creek will soon be applied to another Potato Creek tributary in need of some extra help. In the aftermath of a major pollution settlement involving oil and gas extraction in northern McKean County, plans call for major chunks of the fines resulting from the action to be funneled into habitat restoration work on several McKean County trout waters. Among the first to benefit will be the South Branch of Cole Creek where the re-routing of oil pipelines and erosion and sedimentation abatement work is planned to restore the stream as a good trout fishery.

According to Fish & Boat Commission Chief of Environmental Services John Arway, a major grant is pending to the Juvenile Offenders/Trout Unlimited partnership operating under the auspices of Howard Gustafson and the Seneca Chapter of Trout Unlimited to perform the remedial work of the South Branch of Cole Creek. Twenty youth and five supervisory personnel will begin work here this summer.

Locally, the TU/McKean County Courts partnership has been tagged as the "Boondocs" program, which according to Howard Gustafson stands for "doctors of the boonies."

## Burbot

In addition to the usual array of fish species you might expect to find in a stream of Potato Creek's size and nature, the watershed is also host to at least one unusual inhabitant. The Burbot (*Lota lota*), also known as the freshwater ling or eelpout, is the only member of the cod family that inhabits freshwater. Measurable numbers of burbot have consistently turned up in Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission stream surveys of the main stem of Potato Creek and almost all the stocked tributaries.

According to Area 2 Fisheries Manager Ron Lee, the Potato Creek watershed is unique among Pennsyl-

vania streams in its widespread distribution of these fish. Lee speculates that the Potato Creek burbot population may be the result of migratory patterns during pre-glacial times when the Allegheny River flowed north to meet Lake Erie. Burbot are fairly well distributed in the Great Lakes, and other deep, coldwater lakes of the northern U.S. and Canada.

As fish go, burbot are not much to look at, and they contribute little, if anything, to the Potato Creek sport fishery. Still, they are an interesting find here in the mountain waters of northcentral Pennsylvania.—R.L.P.





# LET THE **SUN** SET ON *Lake* **ERIE** *Walleyes*

*by Mike Bleech*

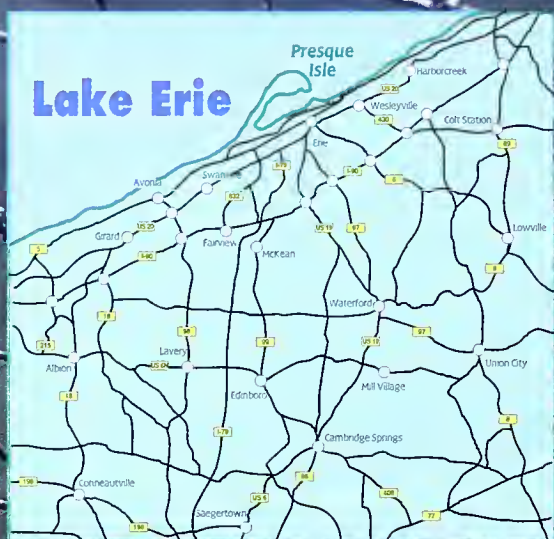


photos-Mike Bleech

“You keep telling me that you have good fishing after sunset, but during the past couple of decades that I have been doing this, I haven’t had much success trolling at night for walleyes out here in deep water. Closer to shore, yes. But not out here.”

I was expressing my lack of faith to Larry Snively about trolling over the deep Lake Erie water for walleyes after sunset. Though noted for their night feeding elsewhere, since I began trolling offshore in Lake Erie for walleyes during the late 1970s, it has been mostly a daytime thing. That is, until the past couple of summers.





*You generally must keep lures deep to catch walleyes during midday now, but from late evening and into the night the trolling methods that have become traditional among Central and Eastern Basin walleye anglers all become effective. So don't sell those planer boards.*



"I don't mind staying," I told Larry, "but I'm out here for the sunset and the cool evening air."

By sunset I would be eating crow.

Indeed, it had been another hot day under the July sun. A bit more breeze would have been welcome. It got pleasantly cool, though, by the time the sun was low in the sky. During the afternoon, we got on the water at about 3:30 p.m., and we boated just a couple of four-pound walleyes and a lake trout. Anywhere else in Pennsylvania that would have been a good afternoon, but by the standards anglers have come to expect at our sliver of the Great Lakes, it was slow.

While the sun was big and orange on the western horizon, one of the Dipsy Diver rods lurched. I pulled the rod from its holder just as the downrigger rod on the same side of the boat bounced, sprung and went into a deep, throbbing bend. Both walleyes arrived boatside at the same time. That pair of 7 1/2-pounders looked good in the net together.

Larry quickly swung the boat back toward where those walleyes struck. He must have hit the right place because soon another walleye out of the same cookie cutter as the previous pair was flopping in the cooler chest. Two more passes through that school were also productive, and later we found another school.

That was the first time in many years that I had such good results trolling offshore for walleyes at Lake Erie after sunset. However, during the two summers that followed, that situation became the norm. Lately we are inclined to take our time getting to the lake.

Walleye fishing patterns have changed all over Lake Erie. Because these patterns changed at the same time Lake Erie water was clearing, it is generally assumed that the two things are connected.

### Changing patterns

Three decades ago the national news media was declaring Lake Erie dead. Of course, it was not dead, but it was terribly sick. Over-fishing, pollution, exotic invaders, dams on tributary streams and unknown factors had decimated native fish populations. Communities and industries dumped their wastes into the lake. One tributary, the Cuyahoga River, actually caught fire. Once fertile



spawning areas became covered with silt and filth.

Owing to the relatively fast flush rate of Lake Erie, by the late 1960s measures to improve the lake were already showing good results. Through the 1970s salmon provided some excitement in the Central and Eastern basins, while walleye fishing in the Western Basin became fabulous. However, the Western Basin especially, and to some extent the whole lake, was still unnaturally fertilized by pollutants. This caused the water color to be brown to green, though clearing considerably toward the deeper Eastern Basin.

While anti-pollution measures were gradually cleaning and clearing Lake Erie, zebra mussels invaded. As their population rose rapidly during the early 1990s, presumably because their feeding method filters water, the lake water quickly became significantly more clear.

Changes in offshore walleye feeding habits appear to be a result of the relatively clear water. The Ohio Sea Grant newsletter reported on the results of a Canadian study that showed how walleye feeding is related to low light. This was in response to a serious decline in walleye angling success that coincided with a high walleye population. This newsletter pointed out that most walleye anglers were stuck with traditional daytime walleye fishing methods, casting weight-forward spinners, for example, but the walleyes were no longer in the traditional places. They had moved to deeper water and tended to feed less when the sun was high in the sky.

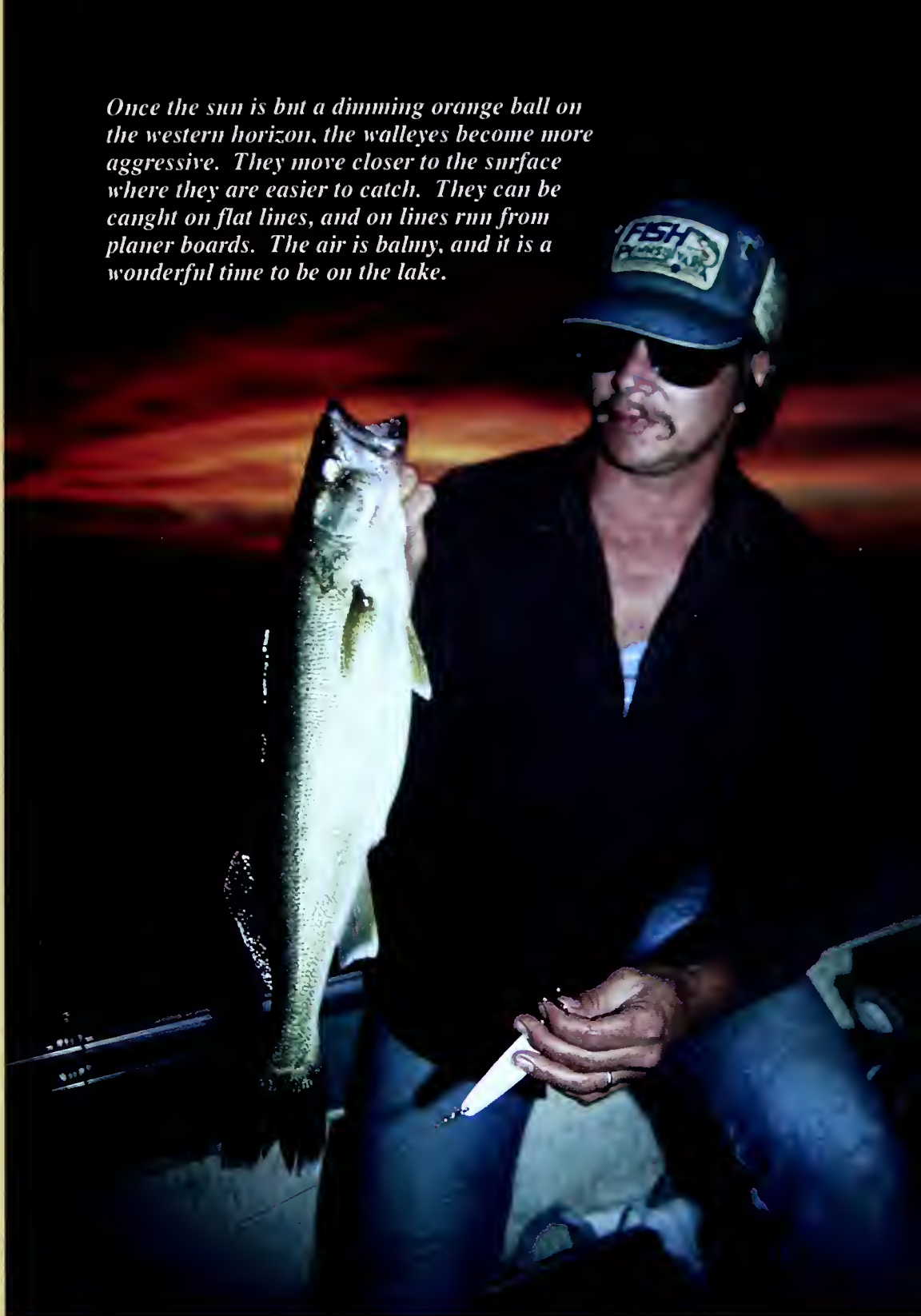
The first fishing indication in Pennsylvania water that something was changing was when planer board trolling results quickly declined. We noticed that one summer lures run from planer boards were most productive, but the next couple of years we had our best results with lures run off Dipsy Divers, Fish Seekers, and other divers. And now, since the summer of 1993, late evening, early morning, and night fishing have been far better than daytime trolling.

Another result of the changing water quality in Lake Erie has been that more of the lake is now walleye habitat. The Central Basin had poor oxygen content in its cooler, deeper water until recently. Then the huge schools of smelt moved to the Eastern Basin during summer and the offshore schools of walleyes followed. Now the smelt, which have declined, can stay in the Central Basin, and walleyes can stay with them. So walleyes are spread out more throughout the lake. Finding them is more difficult.

### Erie's three basins

Lake Erie is the 10th largest freshwater lake in the world, by area, though it is second smallest of the Great Lakes. It was formed by great Ice Age glaciers that advanced from the north.

*Once the sun is but a dimming orange ball on the western horizon, the walleyes become more aggressive. They move closer to the surface where they are easier to catch. They can be caught on flat lines, and on lines run from planer boards. The air is balmy, and it is a wonderful time to be on the lake.*



The lake can be divided by the shape of its bottom into three basins—Western, Central and Eastern.

The Western Basin begins at the western tip of the lake, near Toledo, Ohio, and extends to Cedar Point, Ohio. It is the shallowest of the basins, mostly about 23 feet deep. One depression dips to 62 feet, another to 53 feet. There are numerous bedrock islands and shoals, though elsewhere the bottom is flat.

The Central Basin runs from Cedar Point eastward to the city of Erie, Pennsylvania, where a relatively shallow sand and gravel bar stretches from Presque Isle, Pennsylvania, to Long Point, Ontario. The average depth is 61 feet. The maximum depth is 84 feet. The bottom is extremely flat.

A 75-foot-deep notch in the bar that separates the Central and Eastern basins is known to anglers as the "trench."

The Eastern Basin extends from Erie to Buffalo, New York. It is notably different from the rest of the lake, with a maxi-



# LET THE SUN SET ON *Lake Erie Walleyes*

mum depth of 210 feet, and most of the bowl-shaped bottom is deeper than 80 feet.

The bottom in all three basins is primarily mud. Outcroppings of rock, clay and sand are mostly close to shore. In Pennsylvania water, rocky bottom extends to 45-foot to 55-foot depths east of Erie, but not so deep west of Erie.

## Finding walleyes

Finding walleyes in the great expanse of Lake Erie might seem an imposing task, and in fact, it is if you do not know how to go about it. Knowing that walleyes are more versatile than most, if not all, of our other gamefish does not help. Walleyes can inhabit virtually any part of the lake. They might be beneath the thermocline in 50-degree water with lake trout, near shore in 20 feet of water with smallmouth bass, or gliding offshore just under the waves. They are not constrained either by temperature or bottom composition.

But as we have seen lately, they are limited by light to some degree. Even though this has caused problems for anglers who did not adapt to the changing lake conditions, it can be worked to an advantage. Anything that limits the water walleyes might use narrows the search.

Trolling deep for walleyes is quite a different matter than trolling deep for salmon. Most Great Lakes anglers learned their deep water trolling methods either fishing for salmon, or were taught by anglers who learned on salmon. The differences between walleye and salmon habits in deep water are not such that they are glaringly apparent. You can catch walleyes using salmon methods. But you might fare considerably better with methods tuned specifically to walleyes.

Probably the most important difference between walleyes and salmon in deep water is that walleyes are not so concerned with temperature, so they might be at just about any depth, below the thermocline, in it, or above it. What this means to anglers is that we should not concentrate our lures in any temperature band, although we should always be alert for patterns. If all hits on a particular day are coming between 48 feet and 56 feet, then by all means concentrate the lures in that depth band. But that usually is not the case.

Where we sometimes are misled is when we troll through a school of walleyes within a narrow depth band and then expect other walleyes to be in the same band. Watch for patterns, yes, but do not be too quick to draw conclusions. While one school was between 25 and 35 feet beneath the surface, the next might be 65 to 80 feet deep, and the one after that, 45 to 60 feet deep.

Even among a school of walleyes the individual walleyes are apt to be spread through a wider range of depths than salmon or trout. Last summer we made contact with a school of walleyes while trolling back toward the boat launch, at about 10:00 p.m. They were in 45 feet of water. We caught them near the surface on lures run behind a planer board, and close to the bottom on downrigger lures. It would have been hard to miss that school. That was more of a depth spread than usual, but you get the idea.

One of the first pieces of good advice that I learned about offshore Great Lakes trolling is that the best school of fish is the one that is under your boat. Navigational aids—Loran-C and GPS—are a tremendous help in this regard. So far from shore it is terribly difficult to get any sense of location. We do our best, without navigational aids, to turn back into schools of walleyes. Our only help is the sonar. By reversing direction and staying

over the same depth where we hit walleyes, we usually can get back into schools for several productive passes.

That works only when trolling east and west, parallel to the depth contours.

Most important is staying on the water after sunset. Once the sun is but a dimming orange ball on the western horizon, the walleyes become more aggressive. They move closer to the surface where they are easier to catch. They can be caught on flat lines, and on lines run from planer boards. The air is balmy, and it is a wonderful time to be on the lake.

You generally must keep lures deep to catch walleyes during midday now, but from late evening and into the night the trolling methods that have become traditional among Central and Eastern Basin walleye anglers all become effective. So don't sell those planer boards.

## Diver trolling

Divers—these include the Dipsy Diver, the Fish Seeker, the Jons Diver and others—are remarkably effective on Lake Erie walleyes. Once regarded as an inexpensive substitute for downriggers, experienced anglers now regard them as a different kind of trolling.

They take lures deep, though not with anywhere near the precision of downriggers. Some even also dive to one side or the other, depending on how they are set, which downriggers cannot do. They do another thing downriggers don't do, too, which is wander. This is the thing that makes divers so effective.

The best lures to run behind divers are spoons. Lures that cause much more drag do not run well behind divers. Rig spoons about three feet behind the divers, which is farther than they should be rigged for salmon.

A heavy action rod with a large, level-wind reel is needed to troll divers because they cause so much drag. Larry Snavelly thinks line counter reels are important so he knows precisely how much line is out, and more importantly so he can return the divers to the productive distance behind the boat. Generally the best length of line is 180 to 300 feet.

ANGLER

## *Two Different Walleye Populations*

While fishing for Lake Erie walleyes after sunset you might consider fishing for Lake Erie's "other" walleyes. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation biologists have identified two distinctly different populations of walleyes in the lake. One consists of the wandering offshore schools. They originated from the great spawning grounds in the Western Basin. The other are the locally spawned walleyes that inhabit shallower water, closer to shore.

These home-grown walleyes provided walleye fishing for many years to local anglers. They did not make big news, but they have historically offered good fishing. One reason they did not generate more publicity was because catching them often required fishing at night.

Trolling is a very good way to locate schools of these walleyes. However, the traditional way to fish for them is drifting with bait rigs bouncing along the bottom. This is still very effective, and it is a pleasant change from trolling.—MB.



*Fishing the*

# MIDDLE DELAWARE RIVER

*by Vic Attardo*

*Covering roughly 50 river miles from Portland to Point Pleasant, the mighty Delaware offers some of the most varied and alluring fishing to be found in the southeastern corner of the state.*





Besides the beauty of the big river, the chance of connecting with everything from a trophy musky to a feisty redbreast sunfish is a possibility. On any day, a variety of species can keep you busy, depending on your technique and the time of year. Smallmouth bass, rock bass, bluegills, walleyes, striped bass, channel cats, white cats and even eels are swimming in this river throughout the greater part of the season.

Of course, the American shad brings its own set of fireworks to the Delaware between late March and June. But once departed, the river in the Portland to Point Pleasant zone becomes the sovereign state of other gamefish species.

Above the city of Trenton, the river is unaffected by tidal changes. Its waters are the product of New York reservoirs, the Lackawaxen River and the natural runoff from the Pocono mountains and streams.

There is only one large tributary in the mid-river zone, the Lehigh River at Easton. But the Delaware is also fed by a number of important streams including Martins Creek above Easton, Cooks Creek at Durham, Tinicum Creek below Upper Black Eddy, Tohickon Creek at Point Pleasant, and on the Jersey side the Paulins Kill at Columbia, the Pequest River at Belvidere and the Musconetcong River at Reigelsville. Along the way many smaller creeks collectively contribute to the river's flow and these outlets can play a significant roll in a fisherman's success.

Below the Delaware Water Gap, the river is punctuated with large boulders related to the natural bedrock formation. Many of these boulders lie submerged just below the surface, much to the consternation of powerboaters. But throughout this 50-mile stretch, there are plenty of deep holes and riffles where gamefish feed and congregate.

Once the Delaware was considered an underfished river in some sections. Frankly, I no longer believe this is the case. Shad fishing has brought thousands of anglers to its shores and many return at other times of the year to sample its scaly society. But the Delaware is still not overfished and except for the inevitable Saturday saturation during the peak season, long stretches are often uninhabited.

Flotillas of rented canoes—what locals call “the aluminum hatch”—can be a problem if the paddlers are not considerate. But the canoeists belong on the river as much as the angler, and in truth the fish are so accustomed to them passing by, it seldom disturbs the sport.

## Finding the fish

Some of the best fishing in the Delaware can be found around the river's many islands. In addition to a collection of no-name reefs, Attins, Dildine and Macks islands above Belvidere, Keifer Island above Martins Creek, Whippoorwill and Raub islands between Easton and Riegelsville and Marshall, Treasure and Prahis islands between Upper Black Eddy and Point Pleasant are magnets for gamefish.

The reason for this attraction is simple. The islands create choppy channels and broken riffles where fish find shelter and food.

Generally speaking, one should work the downstream end of an island. For the boat fishermen an effective way to hit these spots is to anchor in the eddy at land's end and drift a bait or lure downstream into the deep pockets formed by the clashing currents.

The wading fisherman can find good holding water near these areas because the islands often create a substantial channel close

# DELAWARE RIVER



to shore. You won't be able to plant yourself where the boats anchor, but a shore-bound fisherman can concentrate on portions of the run where the current moderates. Often this is the secret to good Delaware River fishing.

Still, the most effective way of catching a variety of gamefish in the river is by drifting in a small boat. From a selected launch point, you motor upstream and simply float back along the shoreline casting to likely holes.

In this way a substantial amount of water can be covered while enjoying a leisurely ride. One note of caution, however: Al-



# There are two words to remember when fishing for catfish in the mid-Delaware—chicken liver.

ways lift your prop out of the water or you may wind up with a bent blade.

Other good areas to fish are near tributary waters, particularly those that have a good flow even during a summer dry spell.

Dave Arnold, Commission Area 5 fisheries manager, whose range includes the Delaware downstream to the Lehigh River, recommends that anglers concentrate their efforts at the mouth of these tributaries.

"Wherever you can get a decent flow there is usually a deep pocket that holds fish," he says.

John Saldo, a biologist whose Area 6 extends downstream from the Lehigh, likes to work the riffles and runs where there are rocks along the shoreline.

Any angler fishing the Delaware in late summer and fall should take into account the annual migration of shad fingerlings that are headed downriver. Anytime from October through November these young-of-the-year fish become the main forage base for every gamefish that can swallow them.

Successful fishermen imitate the two- to three-inch shad with a fly or lure. I have seen times when there are so many young shad in the river that gamefish would not move an inch to take an artificial. I've had some excellent fishing at the start of the saltwater line and have had some horrendous fishing at the peak of the migration.

But no matter where and when you fish on the mid-Delaware, you must adjust your techniques to the species you're targeting. Let's look at how to bring some of these gamefish to the net.

## Smallmouth bass

From Portland to Point Pleasant the most widespread and popular gamefish is the smallmouth bass. Most of the river seems tailor-made for the smallmouth. Numerous riffles and runs hold a good number of these scrappy, tiger-striped fish between 10 and 12 inches in length and a reasonable supply of bass in the 13-inch to 15-inch class.

Saldo noted that from the Lehigh River south, electrofishing surveys average some 30 fish per hour in the 10-inch class and five fish per hour over 12 inches.

Arnold believes that the best fishing occurs in the early spring and again in late fall. In the Sandts Eddy area boat fishermen work deep holes with a variety of baits and lures.

"It's hard to say what works best," Arnold says. "Each year the fishermen switch to something different."

Indeed, the techniques used for catching smallmouth bass are as varied as the anglers who fish for them. Everything from live bait to flies will get a bass to strike. A pair of the most successful fishermen I know use only one thing on the end of their line—a juicy hellgrammite, the larva of the dobson fly.

Threaded on a size 8 hook, a two-inch hellgrammite rings the dinner bell for smallmouth bass better than anything else in the river.

Of course, the majority of smallmouth anglers are lure fishermen. With light to medium spinning rods they use entire tackle shops of metal and plastic to catch their quarry.

Small crankbaits and floating minnows are top smallmouth catchers with a 3 1/2-inch floating minnow, chartreuse with silver

sides, an excellent offering when the bass have moved close to the shoreline to feed.

But the hands-down winner of the afternoon lure competition is the old-fashioned jig. In white or crayfish colors, a jig adorned with a plastic tail takes more fish than any other hard lure, particularly in the fall.

These days, more and more Delaware fishermen are using the fly rod to pursue the river's smallmouth. With a collection of streamers and nymph imitations they can dredge the bottom with equal effectiveness of the jig fishermen and lose a lot less equipment. The ultimate in catching smallies on a fly rod is with small poppers in the evening. My favorite is a size 6 popper in either chartreuse, yellow or white.

## Panfish

A lot that is relevant regarding the smallmouth bass is also true about a host of panfish that inhabit this section of the Delaware, including the scrappy bluegill, the boldly colored redbreast and rock bass.

Many a child has been taught to fish by casting a bobber and worm, and certainly this is an excellent way to introduce the casual fisherman to the river's pint-sized bounty. Shore fishermen regularly seek the slower pools and eddies of the river. Fishing the sandy beaches in the Easton and Martins Creek area with garden hackle and mealworms will catch fish.

These same panfish also gobble a variety of lures in the river's riffles and runs. Small spinners, crankbaits and jigs all catch fish.

Tops in my toolbox for the Delaware pan is a size 0 spinner with a copper blade and a red collar.

Commission Area 6 Fisheries Manager Mike Kaufmann notes that his region of the river holds the largest redbreast that he sees anywhere in his district, with some of the broad-bellied scrappers growing to nine inches in length. Mike's favorite redbreast catcher is a chartreuse or green Beetle Spin.

Like the more glamorous gamefish, panfish should not be exploited. It takes a redbreast five years to grow six inches, so it is wise to release adult fish for future spawning.

## Walleyes

How many walleyes do I catch while jigging with a dart during the height of the shad run? Not many, but it's enough to see that a jig of some sort is a top bait for these prized gamefish.

The first mid-Delaware walleye I caught was in the deep water beneath the bridge at Upper Black Eddy. Talking to walleye anglers I soon learned that the old bridge abutments at Point Pleasant were another river hotspot.

"Hot" is a relative term here because some of the best river walleye fishing takes place in late winter and early spring. Melting snow raises the river's water level and the fish, particularly the trophy females, go on the feed.

During the winter, walleyes concentrate in the river's deepest holes and move out to shallower current breaks. When the water temperature hovers around the mid-40s, they spawn on gravel bars and shoals.

To catch these late-season fish, look for deep water adjacent to these areas and wait for the walleyes to move back and forth. Peak periods are those with low light intensity.



# MIDDLE DELAWARE RIVER

Lure selection need not be sophisticated. A white jig is the standard for this type of fishing. But an angler who tips his jig with a shiner traditionally outfishes one with a naked hook.

Taking a lesson from those shad-dart surprises, I usually start with a 1/4-ounce white bucktail and a 2 1/2-inch minnow, if I can find them in a bait shop. I also carry jigs in chartreuse, hot pink and black. Expert walleye anglers are equipped with a lot more.

Because the water is cold, the bouncy rise and fall that a bass angler uses to fish a jig and pig is out of place here. Twitch your lure slowly or even crawl it right along the bottom.

Believe it or not, there is a small but hearty contingent of fly fishermen who pursue river walleyes in the Point Pleasant area. Using a white Lefty's Deceiver, they have had some amazing but limited action with spawning fish.

According to Arnold, some tremendous late-fall fishing for 20-inch walleyes has been taking place over the last few years in the Strousburg area, above Portland.

Saldo says 5,600 walleye fingerlings were stocked between Easton and Raubsville in 1994, but the Commission intends to curtail walleye stocking in the area because of sparse populations in surveys.

## Catfish

There are two words to remember when fishing for catfish in the mid-Delaware—chicken liver. Sticking a hunk of red meat on a size 2 or 4 hook may not be a pretty sight, but it attracts some of the biggest fish the Delaware has to offer.

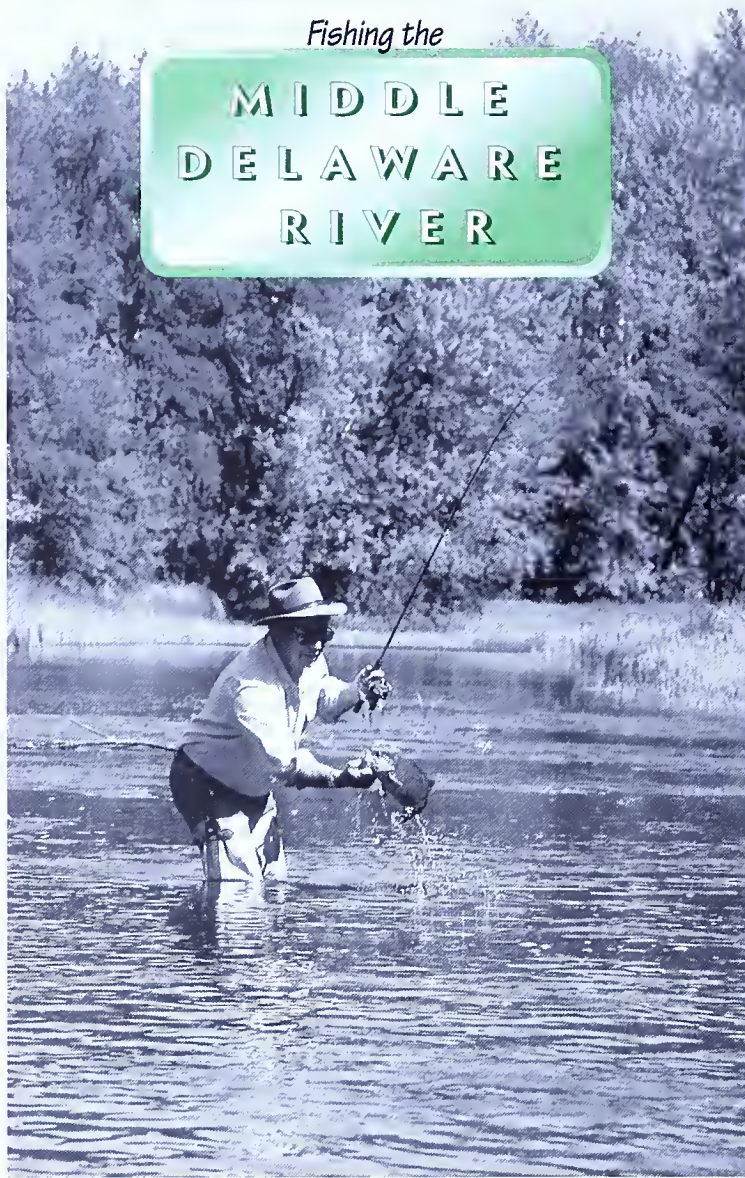
Using a simple 1/2-ounce egg sinker and a baitcasting outfit rigged with 12-pound-test line, I have caught channel cats to my heart's content. Most river catfish are in the two- to four-pound range but eight- to 10-pound channel cats are available.

In the Sandts Eddy area, Arnold sees predominantly white cats in the 14- to 16-inch range. Below the Lehigh, Kaufmann says channel cats are the major species. In this zone the channels average between 15 and 20 inches, with larger fish caught each year. Below the Lehigh the river also holds good number of whites and some brown bullheads and yellow bullheads.

## Muskies

Muskies in the Portland to Point Pleasant area take on legendary characteristics. A few years back there were repeated sightings of a four-footer swimming out of the depths each evening to play off an island near Riegelsville. More anglers tried for that fish than line up for a million dollar lottery.

Most muskies taken in the river are hooked by accident when shad and smallmouth fishermen get the surprise of their lives.



It happened to me one morning and I'll never forget how quickly a spool of six-pound test went downriver. But the elusive fish is pursued on purpose by a few dedicated anglers.

Arnold says the I-80 bridge is a well-known musky hotspot. Some veterans actually work from shore and "they keep their methods pretty much to themselves," he notes.

Live suckers are a traditional bait but my musky dreams have been realized when using a tandem hook lure drifting past the mouths of mid-size streams. I have to admit I'm not out looking for muskies, but while I'm smallmouth fishing I keep a rod rigged in the boat for these special places. A fluorescent-orange spinner with a black tail has worked on cloudy days and a copper-bladed spinner with a yellow tail has worked on sunny days.

Arnold says the Commission each year stocks an average of one fingerling musky per acre in the river above Easton. Below the Lehigh no musky stocking is done and the stocking of

hybrid tiger muskies was curtailed a few years ago.

## Striped bass

Striped bass are definitely the new kid on the block in the mid-Delaware. I caught my first freshwater Delaware striper on a fly in July 1991. I was shocked to find this fish above Trenton. Since then the number of stripers in the river has been on the rise.

Striper fishing is now a major pursuit on the Delaware. Driving along the river at night you see the glow of lanterns as anglers stay up to the wee hours drifting live eels along the deep holes. Bait shops in the area have a hard time keeping up with the demand for the snake creatures.

Some amazing stories have been told about the habits of the striper, not the strangest of which is the fact that some stripers stay in the river throughout the winter. Arnold says that National Park Service rangers taking their dive tests have seen them when there was ice on the water.

Kaufmann notes that above the tidal zone, stripers of one to five years of age have become abundant, a good thing for anglers, since a five-year-old striper can be 21 inches long. This year the size limit on the river is 34 inches. A 34-inch fish is at least 10 years old if a male and eight years old if a female.

With such a bounty of gamefish, it's a wonder the mid-Delaware does not see more angling pressure than it does. The river offers not only great sport but a rich, natural beauty that can soothe the soul in these harried times. Don't forget the river the next time you're planning an outing. It can make your fishing dreams come true.

ANGLER



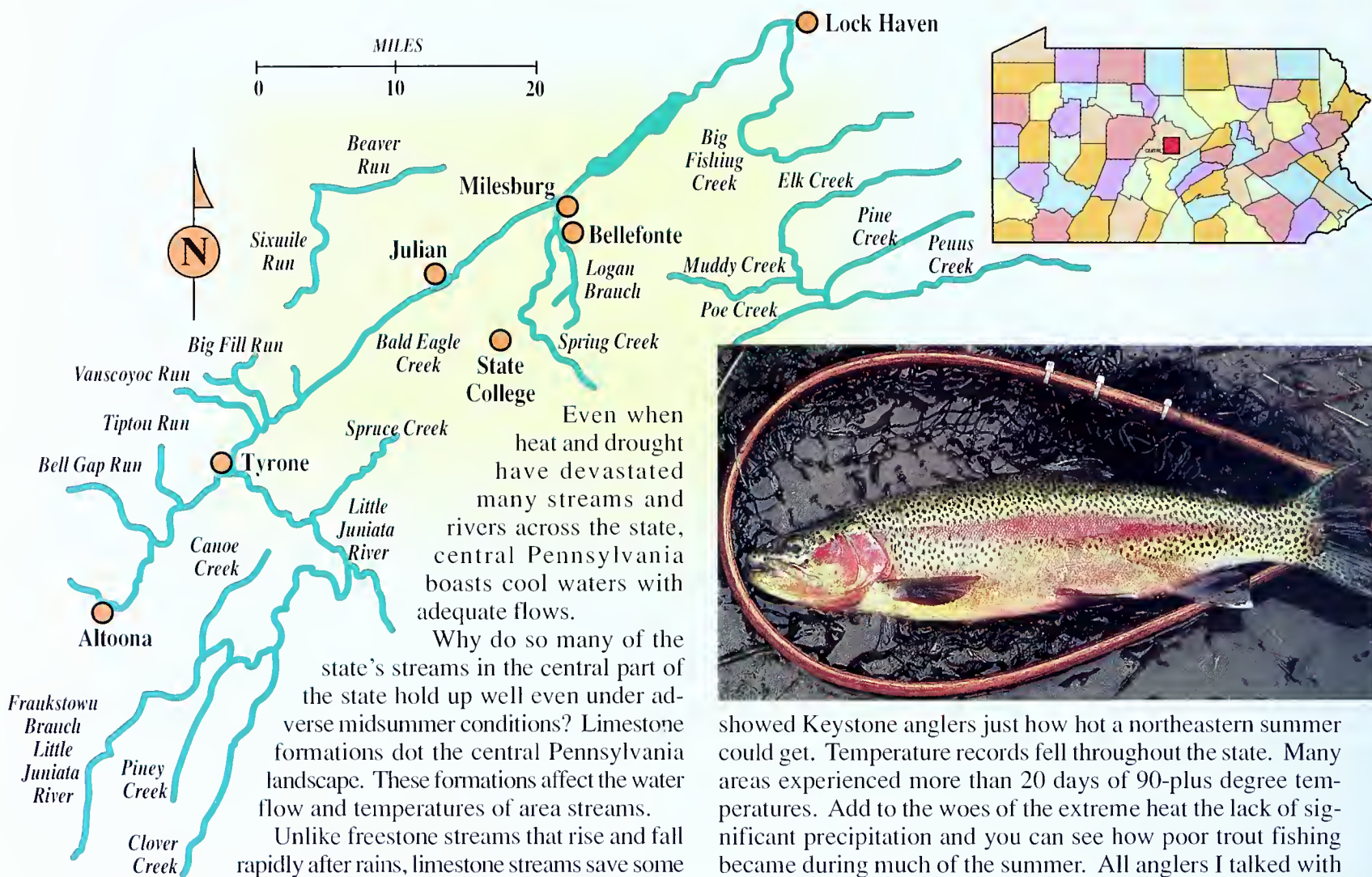
# Central Pennsylvania Midsummer Trout **HOTSPOTS**

by Charles R. Meek



Ben Furimsky of Rockwood just graduated from Penn State in the central part of the state. Nearness to outdoor activities, especially fly fishing near the university, loomed large as one reason Ben chose to study at Penn State. Ben's fly fished for more than half of his 21 years. He likes central Pennsylvania because of the variety of streams available to fish, almost unlimited access to waters, plenty of streams that hold streambred trout and great fishing throughout the summer. Ben fly fished maybe 20 times a semester and several times in midsummer. He's not alone in choosing Penn State because it offers plenty of excellent fishing—I've met others with the same enthusiasm for the Centre County region. Some students even come back during their summer recess to fish the streams of central Pennsylvania.





Even when heat and drought have devastated many streams and rivers across the state, central Pennsylvania boasts cool waters with adequate flows.

Why do so many of the state's streams in the central part of the state hold up well even under adverse midsummer conditions? Limestone formations dot the central Pennsylvania landscape. These formations affect the water flow and temperatures of area streams.

Unlike freestone streams that rise and fall rapidly after rains, limestone streams save some of their water and distribute it later. Many limestone streams hold small springs that guarantee a cool water flow all summer long. Look at the Little Juniata River, just east of Altoona. Just downriver from Tyrone the river enters a limestone formation. In the next 10 miles the Little Juniata picks up additional flow from seven separate continuously flowing limestone springs. Check the temperature of any of these springs and you'll see why they contribute to cold temperatures throughout the summer. Even in the heat of midsummer, many of these cold water tributaries pour 56-degree water into the mainstem.

### Little Juniata River

Several years ago Bob Budd of Altoona and Jim Ravasio of Danbury, Connecticut, met me for a day of August fly fishing. Weather forecasters predicted temperatures to rise that day into the mid-90s. Shortly before noon we left a freestone stream in search of colder water. When we arrived at the Little Juniata River about four miles below Tyrone we headed directly for a stretch just below a limestone spring. When we arrived on the river we saw a midday fog encompass the far shore where the cold water entered. Almost immediately Bob Budd landed a heavy brown trout in the colder water entering the mainstem. On a day when we had difficulty finding water under 70 degrees, we found it on the Little Juniata River. On a day when few anglers expect to catch trout, Bob Budd and Jim Ravasio did.

Recent muggy summers have had an effect on many trout waters throughout the state. Look at the summer of 1988. That one



showed Keystone anglers just how hot a northeastern summer could get. Temperature records fell throughout the state. Many areas experienced more than 20 days of 90-plus degree temperatures. Add to the woes of the extreme heat the lack of significant precipitation and you can see how poor trout fishing became during much of the summer. All anglers I talked with that summer had one thing in mind: Where could they go to



find a good supply of cold water, hatches and trout? I recommended to all of them one of several excellent central Pennsylvania trout streams as possibilities.

### Fishing Creek lesson

In the middle of that summer-long heat spell I had an opportunity to fly fish on Clinton County's Fishing Creek with Dave Rothrock of Jersey Shore. If you've fished state trout streams long enough, then you've encountered several "fishing creeks." But you'll find none more productive, with more hatches throughout



the season and teeming with more trout than the Fishing Creek in central Pennsylvania. While air temperatures hovered in the low 90s in mid-June, Fishing Creek, near Lamar, boasted comfortable temperatures in the low 60s. While trout struggled to survive in some of our more marginal streams, they thrived in Fishing Creek. When the drought reduced sections of some streams to barely a trickle, water flow in Fishing Creek held up fairly well.

On another July morning of fly fishing Dave Rothrock and I hit Fishing Creek just upstream from Mill Hall. Shortly after we arrived we hit a combination of blue quills and tricos emerging and trout feeding on them. These hatches occur daily throughout much of July and August.

### Spruce Creek

About eight miles below Tyrone a major tributary, Spruce Creek, flows into the Little Juniata at the town of the same name. Only one section of Spruce remains open to public fishing. That half-mile section, recently named after George Harvey, contains specially regulated water. Spruce holds some cool water and a decent trico and blue quill hatch in midsummer.

This stretch, owned by Penn State, does warm on occasion but holds some respectable streambred brown trout.

### Piney, Clover creeks

Travel 10 miles west of the Little Juniata River, near Williamsburg, and you'll find two more midsummer limestone gems. Piney Creek holds extremely cold temperatures throughout the summer. In less shaded sections you'll find tricos appearing and plenty of streambred brown trout rising. Anglers usually associate gray foxes and sulphurs as the two hatches to fly fish on Piney in late May. But with its cold water, trout can be cooperative throughout the summer. If you like small-stream fly fishing, don't miss an opportunity to fish Piney Creek.

Just south of Piney you'll find Clover Creek, another limestone stream. You'll see a good hatch of tricos on the upper end and some heavy streambred brown trout on the lower end. Yellow drakes continue to appear on slower sections of Clover into July.

But you'll find many more opportunities to fly fish in midsummer on central Pennsylvania streams than those streams I've mentioned. Anglers overlook some of the best.

Just look at Bald Eagle Creek as an example. Anglers confuse the quality of the lower Bald Eagle, below Milesburg, with the upper portion of that stream near Julian. Above Milesburg, the Bald Eagle warms quickly in midsummer and abruptly transforms into a smallmouth bass fishery. Sections of this upper



*John Ebeling releases a hefty brook trout.*

stream hold barely a trickle in midsummer. But from Milesburg downstream five miles to Sayres Dam, the Bald Eagle usually contains cool temperatures and plenty of trout throughout the summer.

Why? Spring Creek joins the Bald Eagle at Milesburg and cools the warmwater fishery sufficiently to create a trout hotspot for the next few miles. Add to the flow of Spring Creek several small limestone streams and springs that enter from the south in those five miles below Milesburg, and you can now see why the temperature on this large stream usually remains in the 60s throughout the summer.

Yellow craneflies, green caddisflies and tricos provide daytime surface-feeding opportunities for trout in midsummer on the lower Bald Eagle. In the evening yellow drakes continue to emerge in sparser numbers than their peak in late June. On a late August evening anglers can hit the white fly or a pale evening dun hatch to complete the season.

In nearby Penns Valley, anglers find a trio of superb limestone streams that hold trout throughout the summer. Of course



# Central Pennsylvania Midsummer Trout HOTSPOTS

all of us know the splendid attributes of Penns Creek and its great hatches. Few anglers fish Penns in July and August, but hatches appear and trout rise at that time on this classic limestone stream. Most anglers visit Penns in late May and early June when they reacquaint themselves with the spectacular green drake hatch.

During the drake appearance you'll encounter hundreds of anglers ready to attempt to fool lunkers with their matching-the-hatch prowess. Check 10 fly fishers during that hatch and you'll probably find each using a different pattern that each angler swears by. But in July and August few anglers realize that Penns Creek holds respectable slate drake, light cahill, blue quill, trico and blue-winged olive hatches.

## Elk, Pine creeks

Sinking Creek enters Penns at Spring Mills and adds warm water to the mainstem. Were it not for the likes of two high-quality cool limestone streams, Elk and Pine creeks, which enter Penns at Coburn, the mainstem would quickly become a warmwater fishery in midsummer. The upper area of Pine Creek reminds me of a classic English limestone stream. Here you'll find weed-choked pools. Above Woodward, Pine Creek displays all the characteristics of a typical freestone stream. Below Woodward it often goes underground during midsummer and reenters below as a classic limestone stream. Several huge limestone springs enter Pine and make it the single most important source of cold water to Penns Creek below.

Elk Creek above Millheim holds cool water and great hatches throughout the summer. On almost every evening in early July you can find a hatch of small sulphurs (size 18) appearing. Throughout most July days you'll encounter sporadic hatches of blue-winged olives. Every morning you'll see blue quills and tricos emerging on parts of Elk. Many anglers prefer fly fishing the "narrows" just upstream from Millheim. Several landowners in the upper area of Elk have posted the stream as a "no-kill" section.

## Spring Creek

Of course, no discussion of midsummer hotspots in central Pennsylvania would be complete without a look at Spring Creek. Spring has suffered from urbanization and man's inconsideration. Within the past few decades chemical spills, sewage and other deleterious contents have entered this once-fabled stream. Spring has made a gallant attempt to return and now boasts a respectable number of streambred brown trout. Add to the number of trout cool water and a good trico hatch every morning from late July through August and you can see why anglers frequent this no-kill stream in midsummer.

The Fish and Boat Commission just recently acquired my favorite section of Spring Creek just above PA 550. This once-posted section is now open for all anglers to enjoy forever. Here also you'll find a

great trico hatch. About three miles above Bellefonte you'll find Fisherman's Paradise, a section set aside for fly fishing pleasure.

Logan Branch enters Spring Creek in Bellefonte. This cold, small limestone stream holds some lunker browns in its deeper holes. Except for a few tricos, you'll find few other midsummer hatches on this water. Examine some of the aquatic weeds in Logan Branch and you'll find plenty of sow bugs and scuds for trout to eat.

South of State College near Lewistown, anglers can fly fish several limestone streams throughout the summer. Can you believe within a few miles anglers can see the likes of streams called Coffee, Tea and Honey creeks? All contain cold water and good supplies of trout.

## Freestone streams

Central Pennsylvania boasts a number of good freestone streams that hold up rather well during midsummer's stifling temperatures. Freestone streams generally hold a pH (a measure of acidity and alkalinity) around 7 or lower. The pH on limestone streams can rise above 8.0. Freestone stream levels generally rise and fall much more quickly than limestone streams. Thus, during midsummer freestone streams have a much more reduced flow than on limestone streams.

Two freestone streams flow near Tyrone and both hold streambred brown and brook trout and planted rainbows. I've never seen temperatures on Big Fill Run above the mid-60s even on the hottest summer day. Many sections of this small, rhododendron-lined freestone have become posted in the past few years. Big Fill empties into the Bald Eagle just east of Tyrone. This, plus the addition of Vanscoyac Run, pour enough cold water into the Bald Eagle to provide cool temperatures throughout midsummer.

Just a year ago Bryan Meck and I fly fished the Bald Eagle in early July after a week of temperatures above 90 degrees. The two of us caught more than two dozen brown and rainbow trout on that hot, early July afternoon. We recorded water temperatures just above 70 degrees in the middle of that heat wave.

Where else can the midsummer trout fisher find trout in central Pennsylvania? Benner and Sixmile runs, in the northern part of Centre County, and dozens of other small mountain streams dot the central Pennsylvania landscape. Often George Harvey and I head out for a day of fly fishing on these small but often neglected streams. No, you'll probably not catch any lunkers on these small streams but what you lack in quality you make up in numbers. Many of these smaller streams hold good populations of small, native brook trout.

It's July and you don't know where to fish this summer. Maybe some of the streams you fished earlier in the season have become marginal in July and August. Then it's time to try some of central Pennsylvania's hotspots. And look for Ben Furimsky and see where he's fishing. Even though he's graduated from Penn State, you'll find him visiting that section of the state again and again to enjoy midsummer fly fishing.







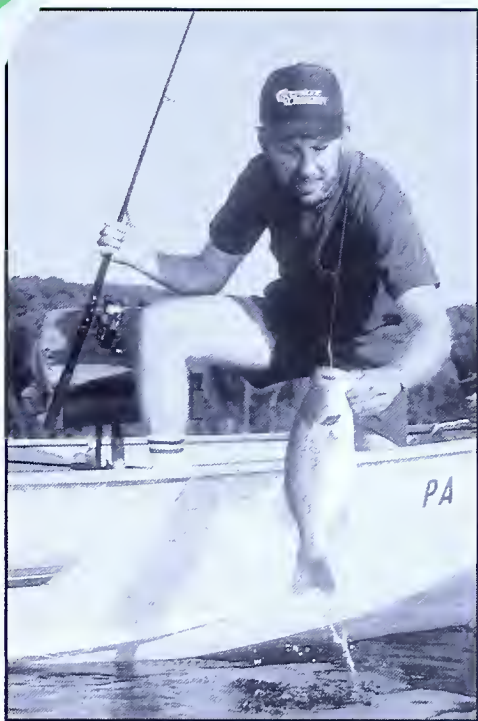
# **Keystone Lake's** **BASS** **FISHING**

*by Jeff Knapp*

Darl Black expertly twitched the soft-plastic stickbait over the top of a tangle of submerged logs. A hefty smallmouth bass of about 16 inches flared its gills as it inhaled the lure, which accurately mimics the action of a dying minnow. Darl spiked the hook home, and in a couple of minutes the bass was in the boat, accomplishing somewhat of a moral victory.

Not that we hadn't had our chances, but that was the first bass either of us had actually managed to bring all the way in. Numerous others had been hooked and lost as we lamented over the lost photo opportunities. We upped our percentage, however, and





### Access, Tackle Shops

Two good access areas are located on Keystone Lake. By far the most popular is the Atwood Access, which is located about mid-point on the lake just off PA Route 210.

Directly across the lake from the Atwood Access is the NuMine Access. It's a good facility, but getting to it requires trailering over about five miles of secondary townships roads off PA Route 85. A sign is located on Route 85 that marks the turn-off.

Tackle stores are located between the lake and Elderton along PA Route 210.—JK.

## Great Keystone Lake Bass Spots

1. The lake's headwaters contain the remnants of about 30 brush piles that sit along the edge of the Plum Creek Channel in about five feet of water or less. This is largemouth water.
2. A small point sits off the north-side opening to this small bay. When weeds develop on the point, it will attract bass, largemouth mostly.
3. A large point sits off the south-side opening to this large bay, extending over a third of the way across the lake. When the weeds come up, this spot holds both largemouth and smallmouth bass.
4. A huge, weed-covered point sits off the northern edge of the bay that contains the NuMine Boat Access. The best weed edge normally develops along the uplake side of the point.
5. A sunken road traverses the width of this bay. It's easily recognizable with a sonar unit, and still has some wood on it, though it took a hard hit during the last drought.
6. One of the most productive points on the lake lies right off the popular Atwood Boat Access. Good weed growth holds bass, smallmouths mostly. We took several bass in the 18-inch range here last summer.
7. A small weed-covered hump sits on the edge of a flat that extends from the eastern shoreline. It tops off at about 10 feet, though the weeds are close to the surface by late summer. It drops quickly into 30-plus feet of water.
8. The most popular piece of structure on Keystone is this large, sunken island. Though it gets pounded, it still puts out a good number of both largemouth and smallmouth bass.
9. This shoreline is riddled with downed trees, and it has an almost vertical drop to it. Expect to catch smallies from here. A late-summer, fall spot.
10. Before the droughts the area around the spillway was one of my favorites for bass and walleyes. The weeds haven't come back yet, but this rocky point can hold some smallmouths.
11. A band of weeds in the 10- to 15-foot range sits in front of this bay and along the shore. Plenty of big smallmouths came from this spot last summer.
12. This shoreline has lots of downed timber, and holds bass in the early summer after the spawning season.
13. There's deeper water along this piece of shore. Lots of wood and shale slides. A good spot late in the summer.



by the time we'd worked the half-mile of bank, 20 or so bass, both largemouth and smallmouth, had been hooked. Even Black, who lives in the bass-rich northwestern region of the state, was impressed with the bass fishery, particularly in terms of size of the bass we'd caught.

That early summer trip took place last year, and we'd actually decided to give the bass a try because the walleyes we were after just weren't going. A good decision on our part, but one made easier by the fact that Keystone's bass fishery has been improving steadily the last couple of years.

## Background

I've fished Armstrong County's Keystone Lake for over 25 years, from the time it was first opened to public fishing. When I was a kid, it was nothing to catch big bass from shore because the lake was full of good-sized bass. Bass populations flourished as Keystone experienced the richness in nutrients common to most newly impounded waters. Following the boom years, fishing pressure increased and the bass fishing came back down to earth.

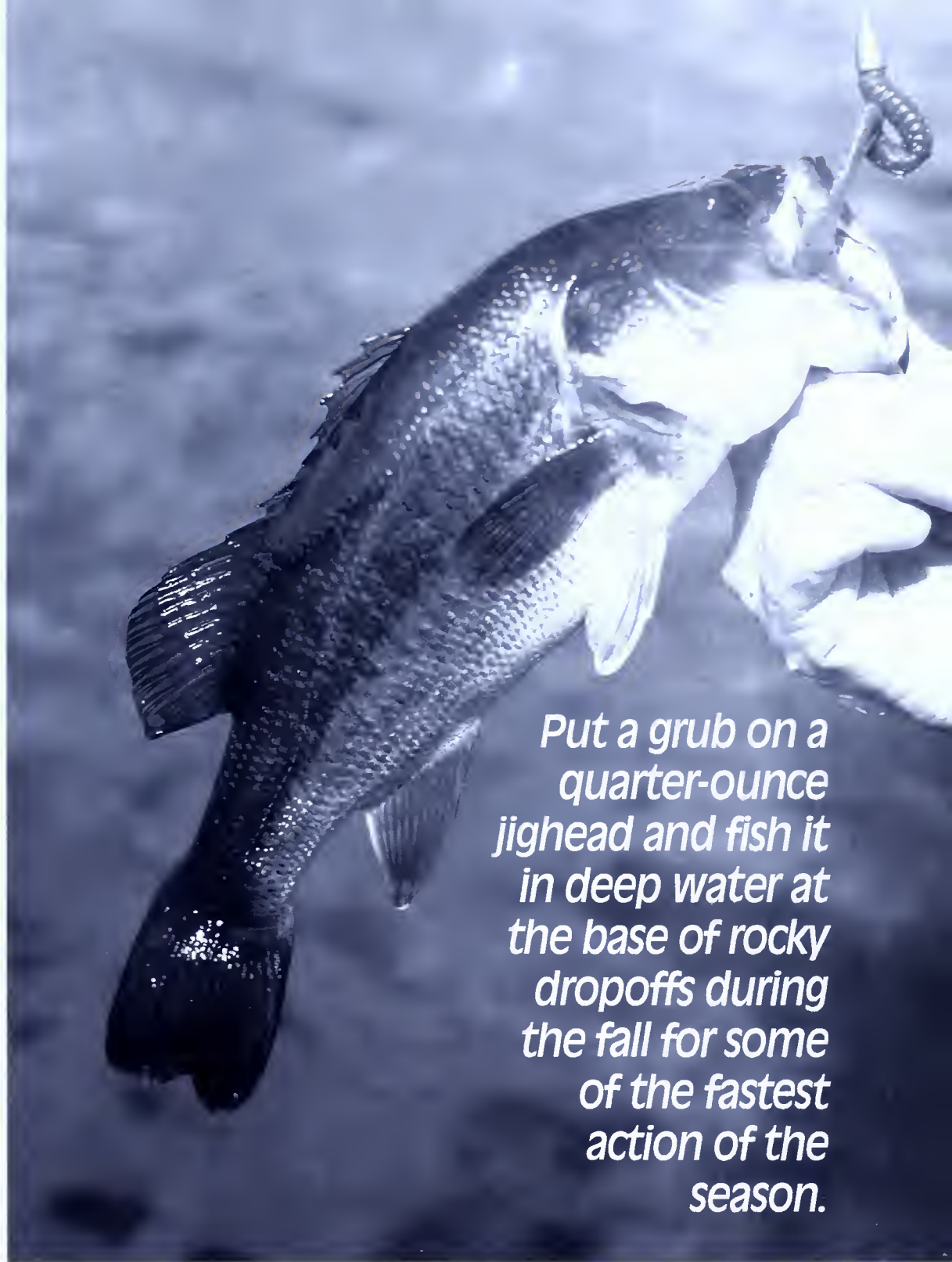
Keystone still receives a great deal of fishing pressure, particularly on weekends after the mid-June opener. But starting in the early 1990s, about the same time Big Bass regulations were established on the lake, the bass fishery has been on the rise in both numbers and size.

Keystone Lake is located in eastern Armstrong County, near the borough of Elderton, along PA Route 210. Its 1,000 acres serve primarily as the water supply for a coal-fired generating station of the same name. Penelec operates the plant, which is owned by a consortium of East Coast utilities. The Fish and Boat Commission leases and operates the lake, and a 10hp limit is in effect. A Big Bass Lake, Keystone has a four-bass, 15-inch minimum size limit.

Because of this usage, Keystone is sometimes referred to as "Keystone Power Dam," which lends some folks to think it's a hydro-electric project, but it is not. Keystone's water is used to cool the turbines, which are located a few miles away.

In addition to its good bass fishing, Keystone is a nice lake to fish from an aesthetic viewpoint. Few houses can be seen from the water, and the main road is visible only in certain places. The water's clarity can range from stained to crystal clear, depending on location and any recent rainfall. Thanks to the clarity, weed growth can be as deep as 15 or so feet. This vegetation can be an important fish attractor. Droughts in 1988 and 1991 lowered the lake significantly, zapping the bottom of some of its growth, but there's still a decent amount of weed growth.

The original Plum Creek channel hugs the east side of the



*Put a grub on a quarter-ounce jighead and fish it in deep water at the base of rocky dropoffs during the fall for some of the fastest action of the season.*

lake in all but the upper third of the lake, where it zig-zags from side to side. What water color there is exists in the upper portion of the lake, and in the backs of the bays.

Keystone has a maximum depth of about 80 feet. It is five miles long. The eastern shoreline tends to drop quickly. The opposite bank has a more gentle drop to it.

In addition to the largemouth and smallmouth bass, Keystone plays host to a good walleye population, which has also seen an increase in the numbers of legal-sized fish. Muskies in the 30-pound range are caught annually. Crappies are not extremely numerous, but they do attain good size. I've taken them up to just shy of 14 inches.

The Fish and Boat Commission is continuing to try to establish a trout fishery in Keystone. The latest shot in the arm for this project was the introduction of 2,000 adult lake trout late in the fall of 1994. These fish averaged 18 inches when they were stocked.



Besides young-of-the-year panfish, Keystone has two important sources of food: Emerald shiners and rainbow smelt. The smelt are a new item. Years of trying to establish a smelt population paid off when adults were discovered during sampling in the spring of 1994. Though smelt may supply food for other Keystone species, they were introduced primarily as a source of forage for the trout.

Surveys by Commission Area 2 Fisheries Manager Ron Lee during 1994 revealed plenty of good-sized bass, as well as walleyes. Emil Svetahor, who until recently was the Waterways Conservation Officer for Indiana and eastern Armstrong counties, said 1994 was the best year he had ever seen for bass fishing in Keystone. The officer checked many anglers who had caught bass in the 20-inch range, mostly smallmouths. Surprisingly, the good smallie fishing lasted until late in the summer.

## Bass picture

From practical observation, I'd say smallmouths outnumber largemouths in Keystone. Both grow to impressive sizes, as seven-pounders of both species have been documented coming from the lake.

Basically, Keystone offers bass three different types of habitats: Weeds, wood and rocks. In many cases it's a combination of two, even all three of these types of cover.

For the most part the weeds that attract this lake's bass are the submergent kind, milfoil and coontail. There's also a couple of types of pondweed (cabbage) in the lake. During a typical year these weeds are three to five feet off the bottom when bass season opens in June.

Weed growth is more common along the western shore of the lake, where the bottom slope is not as great. Bottom composition is softer there as well, making it more conducive to growing vegetation. Much of the better weed growth is located on large points that guard the entrance to the larger bays.

Even though weeds are normally associated with bigmouths, many smallmouths are taken by meticulously working the weeds.

During the 1980s much wood habitat was introduced into Keystone by the Crooked Creek Watershed Association, in conjunction with the Fish and Boat Commission's Adopt-a-Stream program. Bundles of old Christmas trees were lashed together and allowed to drop through the melting ice. Shoreline trees were dropped into the water and cabled to their stumps. Unfortunately, the same droughts that damaged the weed growth exposed a great deal of the wood habitat, allowing it to decompose. Much of what's left is the trunk and larger limbs of trees, with the finer cover gone. Still, shorelines riddled with wood cover hold bass, in many cases, large smallmouths.

The best rock cover is located along the eastern shore of the lake, from the Atwood Boat Access down to the dam. Don't expect to find big boulders that call out "smallmouth." What's available is shale and slate. The places that hold bass tend to be piles of rock from former slides.

# Keystone Lake's BASS FISHING



On windward areas of the lake, you find underwater ledges where the waves pounded into the shore when the lake was at a lower level. These rims can be a hundred yards long, and bass sit along them when they are holding in shallow water.

## Tactics

If I had to describe the type of bass fisherman I am, I would have to confess to being a finesse angler. That is, I prefer the finer points of presentation as opposed to the antics of many anglers. On Keystone I rarely use big spinnerbaits, gaudy crankbaits, and stiff baitcasters spooled with heavy monofilament.

If you limited your selection of Keystone Lake bass lures to those that fall into the soft-plastic category, you are pointed in the right direction. Here's a look at the ones I'd suggest:

### •Finesse-type plastic worms.

Many companies market subtle plastic worms in the five- to six-inch range. Berkley has its Finesse Power Worm, Lucky Strike the Razor Worm. Mr. Twister has the Phenom Worm and Silk Worm.

These baits dupe largemouths, but are more suited for smallmouths, which like a slightly smaller presentation. I've done best with shades of pumpkinseed and motor oil. Weight used to fish the worm should be kept light, no more than 1/16-ounce. This allows a nice, slow decent alongside the cover. And don't be surprised if a walleye or two sucks in your bait.

•**Large plastic worms.** My fishing partner Dave Keith catches more than his share of big bass. Whereas I like the fine-tuned look of a smaller worm, he tends to go for the bigger stuff, like the Berkley Power Worm or Culprit in seven-inch size. In addition to the colors mentioned, blue, purple and grape also produce well.

•**Grub tails.** Variations of the original Mr. Twister swirl-tail grub certainly have their place on Keystone. I like to dress them on a light jighead and fish them in shallow water, particularly for post-spawn bass that are holding in shallow water.

Put a grub on a quarter-ounce jighead and fish it in deeper water at the base of rocky dropoffs during the fall for some of the fastest action of the season.

•**Soft-plastic stickbaits.** I opened this story with a tale of catching Keystone bass on plastic stickbaits. The ones Darl and I used that day were Fin-S-Fish, made by Lunker City, the people who invented the Slug-go.

The Fin-S-Fish is a scaled-down version of this popular lure. We fished them without any additional weight, over the top of cover, primarily wood.

More traditional topwaters, like Jitterbugs and Chug Bugs, pull bass up out of the weedbeds after dark. I'm partial to prop baits like the Devil's Horse, if you can keep the weeds out of the prop.

Thanks to its clear water and intensive fishing pressure, Keystone Lake can yield its bass somewhat reluctantly, but if you lighten up on your presentation, chances are you'll tie into some of its fine bass.

ANGLER



# THE TIME FOR TERRESTRIALS!

It's early July and except for a few mayflies like the trico, yellow drake, and some blue-winged olives, many of the well-known hatches have ended for the fishing season. What do you do now? Do you try to fish one of the infrequent hatches still appearing? Do you use attractor patterns like the Royal Coachman or the Patriot? Do you resort to a productive summer pattern like the Adams? Do you fish underneath with one of the effective bead head patterns? Or do you like so many other fly fishers use terrestrials at this time of year?



BY CHARLES H. HARRIS





Anglers consider terrestrials as those land-borne animals that find their way onto the surface of trout waters. Many fly fishing friends I know consistently rely on terrestrials like beetles, ants, grasshoppers and inchworms at this time of the season. Look at some of their experiences.

Bob Budd of Altoona has fly fished Pennsylvania trout streams for the past 20 years. He's an accomplished fly fisher and from mid-summer to late summer Bob often uses ants and beetles. Several years ago Bob accompanied me to a productive small stream in northcentral Pennsylvania. We ended our fishing trip at a long, slow pool formed by a family of ambitious beavers. Trout found this impoundment to their liking. As we approached the stream an occasional brown and brook trout rose, some almost imperceptibly, throughout the entire length of the 50-foot pool.

Bob immediately tied on a size 20 Black Ant and began casting to the risers. On the first cast a 10-inch brown trout sucked in the small, dark terrestrial. Bob released the fish and cast to another fish that seemed to be sipping in terrestrials. Before Bob completed fishing that small pool, four trout struck at his black ant pattern. That might not seem like a lot of fish, but on a hot, summer afternoon, Bob and I found it a worthwhile trip.

After more than 70 years on many of Pennsylvania's top streams, George Harvey still enjoys fly fishing. From June through August you'll often find a beetle on the end of George's line. George ties his beetle from black deer hair. After he catches a few trout



with the pattern, the deer hair splits and breaks. This makes the pattern even more productive and more "buggy" looking. I've often watched George catch trout on the pattern after it lost all aspects of being a pattern copying a beetle. George usually ties in a bright red, pink or orange feather on the top side so he can follow the beetle even on a stream with a heavy canopy.

Don Bastian of Cogan Station frequently uses terrestrial patterns. His favorite patterns include those that copy gypsy moth caterpillars, June bugs, ants and beetles. Don has landed some heavy trout up to 20 inches long on gypsy moth larva imitations. Don says trout treat the caterpillar similar to the way people like broccoli. "Some fish like the gypsy moth larva and others don't." I like his analogy.

Don also likes using an unusual terrestrial, a June bug pattern. He finds it especially effective in June and July. He ties the pattern with an amber latex body and ties in a dark-brown turkey wing on top.

Ken Rictor of Chambersburg fly fishes Falling Spring Branch any time he gets a few spare minutes. Ken lives just a few minutes from this great limestone stream and finds terrestrial patterns productive on much of the water from June through September. Recently, in August, Ken and I fly fished one late morning on this famous limestone stream. As Ken and I arrived at the stream, Ken tied on a Black Cricket pattern. Within a couple of casts he landed his first streambred rainbow. Before I be-



*From June through September you find inchworms hovering above many trout streams. An inchworm whether you tie it of chartreuse deer hair, cork or polycelon works well.*

*Evan Morse lands a trout caught on an ant pattern.*



**Black ant**

gan casting, Ken had landed another heavy rainbow on that terrestrial. Before I made my first cast, Ken had caught and released two trout. I quickly tore off the Adams pattern and replaced it with a cricket. Before Ken and I quit on that abbreviated morning fly fishing trip we had landed a half-dozen heavy rainbows on that large, black terrestrial.

Andre Lijoi of Hanover finds the Cinnamon Ant and the Foam Beetle in sizes 16 and 18 most effective during July, August and September on the Yellow Breeches. Andre prefers tying the ant with spun deer hair between the two humps. Andre often fishes a size 16 Black Ant as a nymph. Andre finds that sinking the terrestrial really works on highly selective trout. You have to use a strike indicator because the take to a sunken terrestrial is often very subtle.

Why do terrestrials work so well on many Pennsylvania streams? Look at a study of these land animals and how important they are as a source of food for trout.

**Hopper pattern**

In *Trout Streams*, Paul Needham indicated that one-third of a brook trout's diet comes from land animals. This includes two-winged flies like midges, house flies, deer flies and others; adult mayflies, stoneflies and caddis flies; beetles; leafhoppers; ants; grasshoppers; and a dozen other minor animals. Ants, beetles, crickets, moth larvae or caterpillars, and grasshoppers make up almost half of that diet.

*Around August 25 every year many anglers see winged ants on the surface. Sometimes thousands of these terrestrials land on the surface and trout sometimes feed all day long on this source of food. Carry winged ants in sizes 18, 20 and 22 with body colors of black and brown.*

Although much of his work was done more than 40 years ago, this study still indicates the importance of terrestrials as a food source. For brook and rainbow trout, Needham found the beetle to be the top terrestrial. The beetle made up almost seven percent of a brook trout's total diet and almost eight percent of a rainbow trout's diet. Needham found that brook trout fed much more often on leafhoppers and beetles than on other ter-



restrials. His study also showed another interesting feature—brook trout seldom take true bugs like the water boatman, water strider or the back-swimmer.

In the same study Needham found that brown trout take fewer terrestrials than do brook and rainbow trout. Brown trout take more stoneflies, caddisflies and mayflies than do the other two.

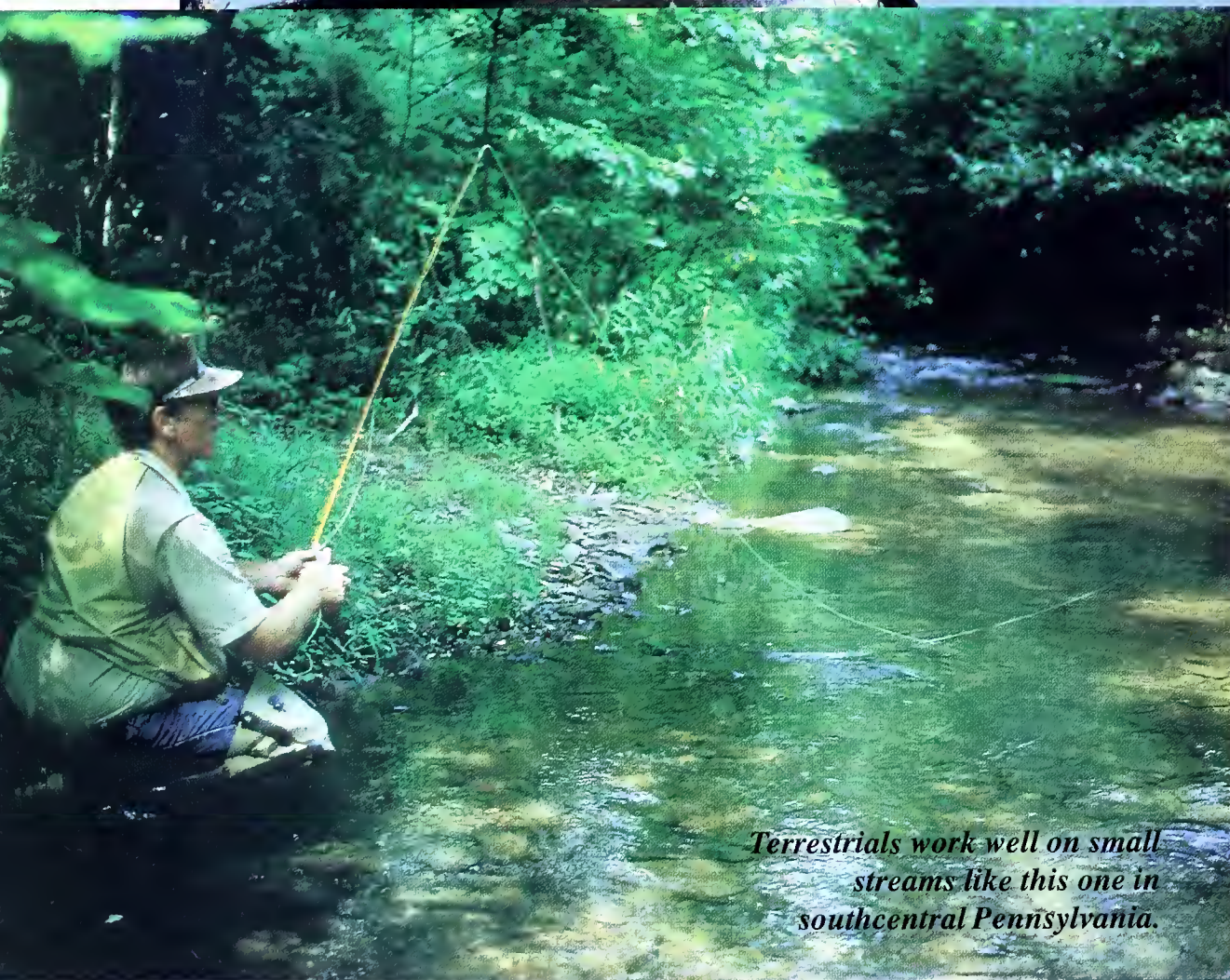
What can you gather from this study? Probably your first choice of a terrestrial pattern should be a beetle. Because this is so common and available much of the year it's a good first choice. A good second choice from the study would be the ant. Tie the beetle and ant in sizes 14, 16, 18 and 20. Black is my first choice of colors but on many occasions both ant and beetle



# TIME! FOR TERRESTRIALS!



*This cricket pattern works well on southcentral Pennsylvania limestones streams.*



*Terrestrials work well on small streams like this one in southcentral Pennsylvania.*

*What works well on small streams in midsummer? Terrestrial patterns are productive on these unnamed branches and tributaries as well as on many of the state's larger streams throughout the summer.*

photo-Charles R. Meek

patterns in brown and cinnamon seem to work well.

I often prefer fly fishing one of Pennsylvania's top small streams. On many of these native trout streams you rarely find another fly fisher. Sometimes I can fly fish on these creeks, branches and runs an entire year and never see another angler. I often prefer fly fishing these streams in midsummer where I know I can find cool water. But small streams lack many of the major hatches you find on other Keystone streams. Even in midsummer many major trout streams in the state hold tricos, blue-winged olives, yellow drakes, light cahills and blue quills. Few small streams boast any great hatches of these mayflies. And if you do find a hatch, chances are it doesn't appear in any heavy numbers. What works well on small streams in midsummer? Terrestrial patterns are productive on these unnamed branches and tributaries as well as on many of the state's larger streams throughout the summer.

I said earlier that terrestrial patterns copy land insects that



fall, get blown, or wander onto the water's surface. Anglers call these insects "terrestrials" because they originate on land. Common terrestrials include ants, beetles, grasshoppers, crickets, caterpillars and others. Others? Yes, what about moths and jassids? You'll see later how important moths become as a source of food for trout. Look at some of the more important terrestrials.

## Grasshopper

You find hopper patterns especially effective in July, August and September. On big waters like the Little Juniata River, the Delaware River, the lower Bald Eagle, and Fishing Creek (Clinton County), hopper patterns work well along the edges. On any small stream like Falling Spring Branch where you find some fields along the shoreline, you find the hopper pattern especially effective.

## Cricket

Don't overlook this important pattern, especially on some of the smaller limestone streams. I tie the cricket similar to a Muddler Minnow, but with black deer hair and black wings. I tie a body of black poly. On small limestone streams the cricket works especially well. Tie them on long-shank dry fly hooks in sizes 12 and 14. Grease this and the hopper pattern so they float well.

## Gypsy Moth Larva

Gypsy moth larvae emerge from eggs in early May. Trout seem to take these black-bodied caterpillars when they're relatively small. Don Bastian believes some trout eat the naturals while others refuse them. As the larvae grow larger, trout seem not to take them as readily. The best time to use a black larva pattern is mid-May to late May. I tie my larva with a black polycelon cylinder and rib it with a short grizzly saddle hackle.

## White Moth

The white moth, or elm spanworm adult, is active on many northern Pennsylvania streams from mid-June through mid-July. If you hit this moth on any trout stream you're in for an unbelievable experience. The female is a poor flier, so many of them fall onto the surface of forested streams. Carry a White Wulff pattern in size 12 with you if you plan to fly fish in early summer. If you want a pattern that more closely copies the natural, use white deer hair to copy the wings and dub a heavy white poly body. Craig Josephson and I hit the white moth on several small streams in northcentral Pennsylvania. That white moth pattern proved to be a most productive one.

The elm spanworm larva frequents many trout streams in the Keystone State. The ashen-gray or green caterpillars bring trout to the surface in May and June. Tie some of these on size 10 long-shank dry fly hooks.

## Tan Moth

You see plenty of tan moths on and near small streams as late as October and November. Tie patterns similar to the White Moth in pale tan and in sizes 12 and 14. Carry some of these patterns for late-fall fly fishing.

## Ant

Look around next time you fish near a trout stream. Check that log that has fallen across the stream. If you look closely you'll see ants crawling back and forth. Occasionally these ants

get blown into the water and trout eagerly feed on them.

Carry some winged ant imitations with you. Around August 25 every year many anglers see winged ants on the surface. Sometimes thousands of these terrestrials land on the surface and trout sometimes feed all day long on this source of food. Carry winged ants in sizes 18, 20 and 22 with body colors of black and brown.

Between the two humps on the imitation I add a small piece of white poly or Z-lon to copy the wings and a black hackle to copy the legs.

## Beetle

With new foam-type polycelon bodies you'll find beetles easy to tie and they float all day. If you prefer the Crowe-type Beetle, use black deer hair. The Poly Beetle makes a third choice of tying patterns for the beetle. To tie the Poly Beetle use a heavy strand of black poly yarn. Tie in a strand or two of black poly yarn, depending on the size of hook you're using, at the bend of the hook of a size 16 or 18 hook. With black thread tie in the poly yarn well down the bend of the hook. Then pull the yarn up over the top of the hook and tie off at the eye. To make a Japanese beetle imitation add a peacock herl to the underbody before pulling the yarn over the top. If you don't use a peacock herl, use black poly or black thread and cover the shank of the hook thoroughly.

## Jassid

Earlier I noted the study by Needham in *Trout Streams*. In that study Needham discussed the importance of leafhoppers. The Jassid pattern works especially well on many of the Keystone State's limestone streams. Tie it on sizes 20 to 24 hooks. Make the body with a small hackle and shape and place a gray mallard feather over the top.

## Green Inchworm

For more than 60 years George Harvey has tied a Green Inchworm pattern. He found that this pattern tied with deer hair worked well on many central Pennsylvania streams. George's daughter caught dozens of trout on a Green Inchworm pattern on Fisherman's Paradise on Spring Creek. One day dozens of anglers stopped fly fishing and watched his daughter catch trout on that terrestrial pattern.

Why does this pattern work so well? From June through September you find inchworms hovering above many trout streams. An inchworm whether you tie it of chartreuse deer hair, cork or polycelon works well.

Recently George Harvey tied a new Green Inchworm pattern. He ties in about 25 to 30 pieces of chartreuse deer hair just below the bend of the hook. He then brings some of the deer hair over the top and some underneath the shank of the hook. He ties in the deer hair near the eye and ribs the patterns with chartreuse thread. George ties this inchworm on a size 10 long-shank, dry fly hook.

Which patterns will you be using this July, August and September? Will you use an attractor pattern like the Royal Coachman? Maybe you'll try an Adams pattern that copies so many slate drakes. Why not try using one of the productive terrestrial patterns? Try an ant, beetle, cricket, inchworm, jassid or hopper. You'll find that these and other terrestrial patterns get you through the dog days of summer. With an ample assortment of terrestrial patterns you can make those late-summer fishing trips memorable. Once you use these patterns on those midsummer days, you'll forever depend on terrestrials.





# On the Water

with Robert L. Petri

## The Last Bass

After endless standardized tests and a progression of tense, one-on-one interviews, it appeared I had passed muster. At 17, I had accepted at the college choice. With a high school academic record dotted with A's and matching SAT scores, I was evidently a paradox the officials at the little Lutheran college wanted to study. I was invited to attend the summer session at the school as a condition of admission for the fall term.

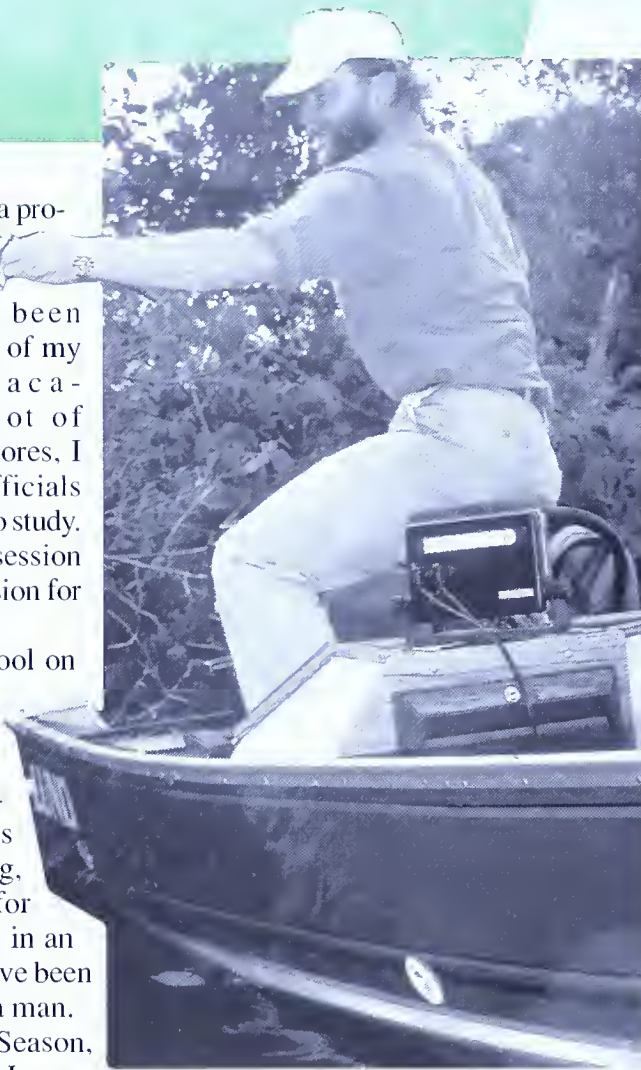
I was instructed to arrive at school on the third Sunday in June, or to be more precise, The Second Day of Bass Season, a very holy day on my calendar, whose importance was surpassed only by The First Day of Bass Season. I was appalled at the timing, but I figured this was my penance for all those years spent with my nose in an outdoor magazine when I should have been studying. I accepted my fate like a man.

Saturday, The First Day of Bass Season, brought the kind of dawn I live for. Layers of mist slid silently across the ground, and the dew made the lawn shimmer and sparkle like a silvery carpet. With rods, nets and tackle boxes in hand, my father, my brother and I made our way out the back gate and down over the bank to the creek and the second-hand 12-foot cartopper we kept there.

The creek had shaped my boyhood. It had been my wonderland to explore for as long as I could remember. Four-and-a-half miles of twisting, mud-banked mystery that connected Lake LeBocuf to French Creek, it teemed with largemouth bass and panfish. I knew and loved every inch of it. It had been my boyhood refuge and personal kingdom. I had explored its banks, far from home, and stalked its bass through the most formidable clouds of mosquitoes I have ever seen. It was a part of me, and I didn't want to leave it, even for the summer.

Our opening day drill had not changed in a decade. We loaded the boat and headed upstream to the lake. As we worked a favorite weedbed, a largemouth of 19 inches engulfed my balsa wood minnow, and tried to kiss the sky in anger and surprise. I landed him, and several other lesser ones as well, as did my dad and brother. It was a good start, but the best was yet to come. Now it was time to head down the creek.

Between banks anchored by willows and sycamore, my dad navigated the little boat from his seat in the stern as we drifted slowly down the creek. My brother and I were casting the balsa wood minnows with a fervor that suggested that tomorrow might not come. In a sense, for me, it wouldn't. I was off to school.



My dad leisurely flipped a frog-finish Flatfish up tight to the log jams and against the clay banks. He retrieved it as a Flatfish should be retrieved, so slowly it almost hurt. To watch was almost more than I could bear.

The creek pushed itself through a horseshoe bend, and then narrowed and deepened as it slid through and around a huge log jam. Over the years this had been the place for big bass. I had the catbird seat in the bow. I cut loose and the open-face reel sang with departing line. The cast could not have been more perfect, almost as if fate were calling the shots. It landed within an inch of the log jam. I raised the rod tip slowly and gave the lure a single, quivering twitch.

There was no explosion, no cascade of water droplets, no sound—the lure simply disappeared. The line went taut and my rod bent in an arc that said that whatever was on the other end was powerful and meant business. “Big fish!” I screamed, and then proceeded to hang on. With a push of the oars, my dad

brought the boat around and held it steady as the bass and I had it out. Several minutes of give and take followed. The fish dived for the log jam, and I pressured him with the rod and dragged him back into open water. Once, twice, three times; I turned him. The fourth time he prevailed and wrapped my line around a thin but strong branch. Seconds later, the line parted.

“Gone,” I mumbled. “Maybe not,” said my dad.

I reeled in and we approached the log jam. There, exhausted and gills slowly pulsing, lay the bass. The lure was still in his jaw and a perilously short length of mono remained wound around the branch. My dad grabbed the net, and with a single swoop brought bass, lure and branch all into the boat together.

It was, and still is, the biggest bass of my life. A hair shy of 22 inches long, with a broad back and wide flanks that pushed it up tight against the five-pound mark. It was the last fish of the day, and the last page in a chapter of my life. Tomorrow, I was off to college.

The ancient five-horse Mercury gurgled and spat as we made our way back up the creek toward home. The day was warm and the breeze felt good in the bow. In years to come, there would be other streams, other fish. Many would be notable for their size, others for the stream where they were found or the battle they gave. None would ever equal in importance this last bass of my youth. Some fish you remember for their size and location. Others are signposts along life's road—final farewells from times and places gone by.

ANGLER

photo-Doug Stamm



## Dan Martin Wins National Water Safety Congress Award

Commission Boating Safety Education Specialist Dan Martin won the National Water Safety Congress Award of Merit for his outstanding contribution to water safety.

One of Martin's primary Commission functions is to act as the Commission's liaison with the Coast Guard Auxiliary and the U. S. Power Squadrons. His outgoing personality and ability to understand the operational intricacies of these organizations have enabled Pennsylvania's collaboration to be foremost in the nation. Through Dan's leadership, the Pennsylvania Auxiliary partnership has become the model for the nation. These groups conduct dozens of boating safety classes each year certifying thousands of students who receive boating safety certification from the Commission. Dan creates instructor outlines and teaches in a variety of situations. He ensures that all material is up to date and accurate.

Dan also serves as the Boating Accident Review Officer for Pennsylvania. When assigned to this position, he worked with the Bureau of Law Enforcement to revise all the forms and procedures used to prepare an accident investigation. After an accident report is received, Dan analyzes the data and prepares detailed reports. These reports are used by law enforcement personnel, educators and regulators to devise methods of decreasing the number of individuals injured or killed in boating accidents. Through Dan's efforts, Pennsylvania has a means to track the trends in boating accidents. Pennsylvania has a very thorough knowledge of its accidents as a direct result of Dan's efforts.

The creation of training plans is another of Dan's strong points. He has been directly responsible for the creation and presentation of many professional training programs. He is a primary instructor for the Commission's Employee Boating Safety Training Program and has presented many courses to other state agency personnel with the goal of improving boating safety.

Dan coordinates the Commission's boating publications program. He writes brochures, news releases and other publications in a form that is easily understood by the public. He strongly influenced the development of the very successful *Boater's Handbook*.

The award was made in May during the National Water Safety Congress annual meeting in Florida.



Dan Martin

## The Law and You by Jeff Bridi

*May I fish for bass during the closed season even if I don't plan to keep any?*

Many people wonder if it is permissible to fish for a particular species during the closed season on a catch-and-release basis. The Commission does allow catch-and-release fishing for trout in many specially regulated areas such as delayed-harvest or trophy-trout areas. However, currently no special catch-and-release regulations are in effect for other species of fish. The whole question of whether a person should target a species such as bass during a closed season raises many ethical considerations and can spark a heated debate.

The fishing regulations state that it is unlawful to catch fish except during their season. To protect those who may inadvertently catch a fish during the closed season, it states that it is not a violation if a fish is caught during a closed season while legally fishing for another species *if the fish is immediately returned unharmed to the water*. Anglers who target a fish during the closed season and plan to release it are not complying with the regulation because it covers only the situation when the angler may be legally fishing for something else. In addition, the angler could potentially harm the fish and could then be liable for violating the closed season regulation.

The best course for anglers is to avoid catch-and-release fishing for a particular species during the closed season unless they are fishing in an approved specially regulated water. The current regulations are not intended to sanction fishing for any species during the closed season even on a catch-and-release basis.



James R. Cooper shows the 5 3/4-pound, 22-inch brown trout he caught in Wolf Creek, in the Allegheny National Forest, near Russell City, Elk County. Cooper fooled the fish with a salmon egg.



## One-Time-Only Stocking Provides Different Opportunity

A one-time-only stocking of coho salmon in Lake Marburg, York County, is providing area anglers with a different fishing challenge this spring. The Commission released some 17,000 coho salmon into Lake Marburg last May 10, the only time the species will be planted in the area. The fish, a surplus that could not be used in the Commission's Lake Erie stocking program, will not migrate and will not spawn.

The majority of the coho are 18 months old and range in size from five to 11 inches. Having been held in the hatchery beyond the size and age when they would normally become downstream migrants, or "smolts," there is no expectation these fish will reproduce. Salmon usually imprint for spawning when they become smolts. Commission biologists stress that these coho are managed as a put, grow and take fishery. That is, the fish are stocked with the expectation they will be harvested by anglers. Those that are not caught will mature and die of natural causes.

The coho fill a biological niche in the lake very similar to that of the hatchery-

raised rainbow trout that have been stocked in Lake Marburg. Interestingly, a coho's external appearance is also very similar to a rainbow. Coho tend to be more silvery, without the pink lateral stripe characteristic of rainbow trout. The easiest identification key is to check the mouth. Coho sport a black mouth with gray-white gums. Rainbow trout have white mouths.—Dan Tredinnick.



*The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.*

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## Angler's Notebook by Jeff Bryan



A useful trick for bass is to use a deep-running crankbait in water of moderate depth. Crank very fast to get the bait down on the bottom so the long lip of the lure ticks the bottom, kicking up mud and gravel.

When your weather forecaster predicts a drastic change in the weather, plan to be on the water before it arrives. Fish often begin to feed heavily just before a cold front moves in.

One of a trout's favorite places to hide is an undercut bank. Be on the lookout for them as you fish, and be sure to make many casts in the pockets under the bank. Stand well back from these prime holding lies while casting so you don't spook the fish.

Trolling is an excellent way to locate schools of walleyes. Watch your depth finder and look for underwater structure like islands, humps, old road beds and sunken points. When you catch a fish, note the location and fish the area thoroughly.

Sunset is usually the best time to find rising trout in ponds. Once the wind has died and the water has calmed down, insects often start to hatch, swarming over the surface of the pond.

Instead of holding your rod low and pointed at the water while stripping a streamer, raise your

rod to a 45-degree angle above the water. This way, if a heavy fish strikes, the flexibility of the rod will act as a shock absorber, resulting in fewer break-offs.

At times a hooked fish, especially a big fish, will seek hiding places during the fight and sulk. There are several tricks you can use to get these stubborn fish to move. One is to make sure the slack is out of the line, and then gently pluck the line like a guitar string. Another tactic that sometimes works is to tap lightly on the butt of the rod with your knuckles, as if you were knocking on a door.

If a fish you are playing heads under your boat, do not panic. Just shove the tip of your rod into the water and "walk" it around to the other side of the boat. Then resume the fight. When doing this, however, avoid the prop, anchor line, stringers and bait baskets that might be hanging from the boat.

Bluegills begin to spawn when the water temperature reaches the mid-70s, and this is a prime time to catch a great deal of fish. Locate the fish's beds by looking for circular depressions in coves and bays, near the shoreline. Approach them carefully, and cast small jigs or spinners past the beds, retrieving the lure right through them.

*illustration- Ted Walke*



# SMART

## Angler's Notebook

by Carl Richardson

### Know Your SUNFISH

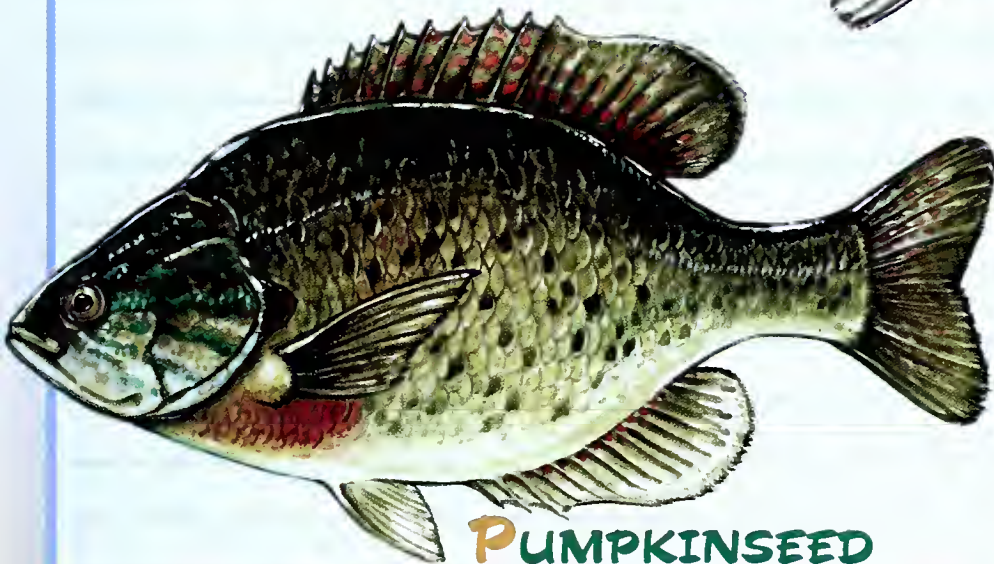
In Pennsylvania there are several different kinds of fish that anglers call "sunnies." They are all members of the Sunfish Family. Each fish has its own special habitat requirements and preferences. Many of them live in the same waters, but are usually found in different spots. All are important food for larger gamefish.



#### BLUEGILL

**Habitat:** Found in the warmest Pennsylvania lakes and ponds and the slowest-moving sections of large rivers. Likes shallows with muddy bottoms with some vegetation. Eats insects and often eats plants.

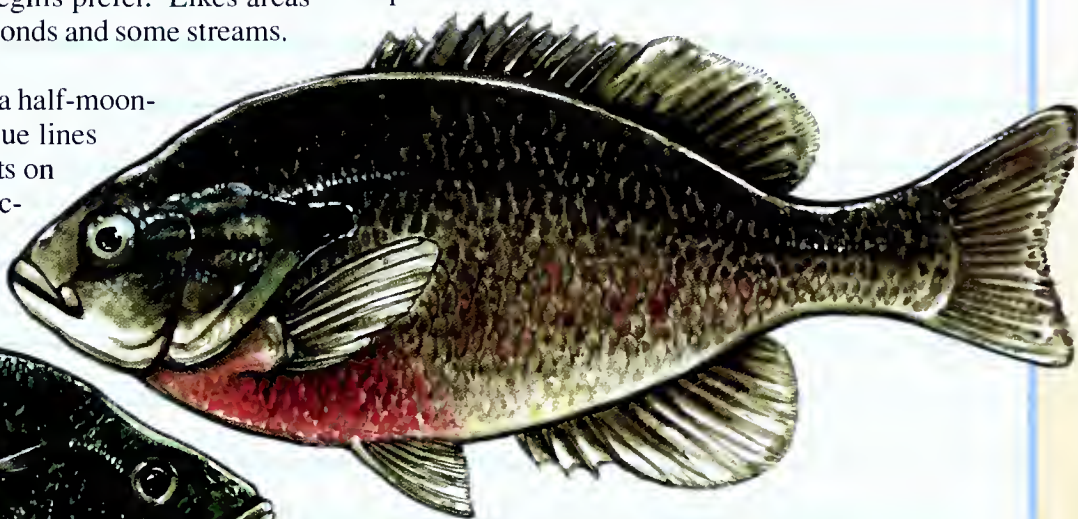
**Description:** Color varies from dark olive-green to brown. Head and cheek are dark blue with a solid black or dark-blue spot on the gill cover. Almost always has a dark spot on its dorsal fin. Usually has dark vertical bands on body. Pectoral fin is pointed. The largest of the sunnies, bluegills can reach 12 inches and weigh two pounds.



#### PUMPKINSEED

**Habitat:** Doesn't like the warm water bluegills prefer. Likes areas with lots of thick vegetation. Found in lakes, ponds and some streams. Eats insects and other invertebrates.

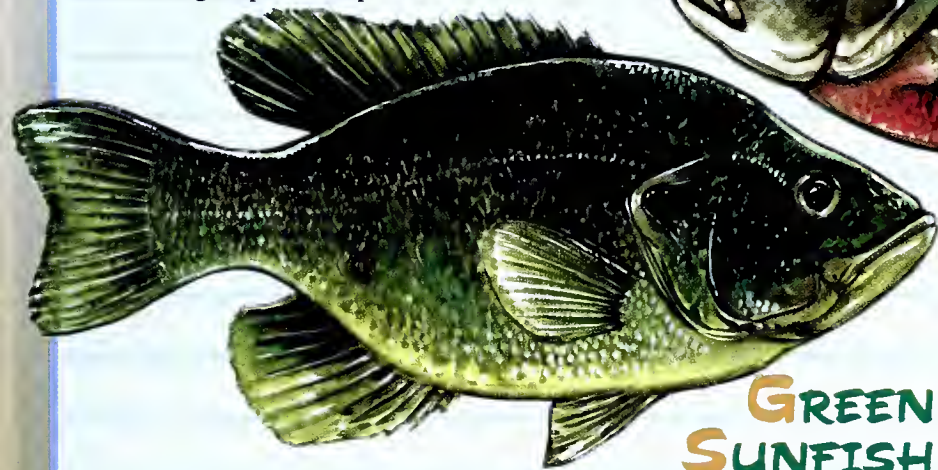
**Description:** Spot on gill flap is black, with a half-moon-shaped spot of red and light border. Wavy blue lines on cheek and head. Wavy lines or orange spots on dorsal, anal and tail fins, and the lower body. Pectoral fin is long and pointed. May reach 10 inches and weigh up to one pound.



#### REDBREAST SUNFISH

**Habitat:** Found mostly in warm streams and the upper reaches of some rivers. Likes rocky cover and avoids fast water. Found in a few clear, cold lakes. Eats insects, crayfish and small fish. Can eat clams, mussels and snails.

**Description:** Body color is brown to olive. Chest is bright yellow to orange-red. Gill flap is long and soft and colored black with no border. Blue streaks on cheek. Often 10 to 12 inches long and can reach weights close to two pounds.



#### GREEN SUNFISH

**Habitat:** Clear lakes with rocky bottoms. Eats aquatic insects and sometimes fish. It also eats clams and snails.

**Description:** Gill flap is wide and has a black spot with a red, pink or yellow border. Has a large mouth. The corner of the jaw is below the eye. Has wavy blue-green bars on cheek. The pectoral fin is rounded. The smaller of the sunnies, an 8-inch green sunfish is a real trophy.

ANGLER



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# Pennsylvania ANGLER





# Straight Talk

## Workshop Suggestions Result in Action

When the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission conducted nine public workshops across the state last year, there was a singular purpose: Solicit suggestions and recommendations from the anglers and boaters in evaluating the Commission's management practices. Today, many of the suggestions offered are currently being investigated or acted on by the staff. Furthermore, plans are being drawn for gathering even more input that can be used to tailor programs to meet the needs and expectations of our customers.

With meeting locations in Brockway, Cresson, Hershey, Kutztown, Meadville, Murrysville, Scranton, Warren and Williamsport, participants often focused on issues of regional interest. Some recurrent themes did surface, though, and I'm pleased to report that the participants, suggestions and ideas were generally supportive of the Commission and its direction.

This spirit of cooperation led to some valid recommendations, and implementation of those ideas suggested by the public has already begun. For example, suggestions for restructuring the tourist fishing license were incorporated into our fishing license increase legislation.

For the benefit of those who were unable to attend these meetings, a few of the many suggestions are listed below. They are organized by topic area and show the Statement proposed by a meeting participant(s), group Response and Action the Commission is taking to address the suggestion.

**S: *There is a need to promote/increase education programs.***

**R:** 82 percent agreed/strongly agreed while 8 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed.

**A:** Efforts to increase education of school children are continuing. Partnerships with other groups to bolster the Commission's education efforts are also being investigated.

**S: *The Commission should charge for consumptive use of water.***

**R:** 78 percent agreed/strongly agreed while 8 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed.

**A:** The Commission is investigating this and other alternative sources of funding. Legislation will have to be enacted.

**S: *The Commission should increase law enforcement presence.***

**R:** 71 percent agreed/strongly agreed while 12 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed.

**A:** A contingent of 10 waterways conservation officers has graduated and has been placed in regional assignments. A class of 20 WCOs will graduate in June of 1996.

**S: *The Commission should pursue resource damage assessments.***

**R:** 71 percent agreed/strongly agreed while 11 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed.

**A:** The Commission continues to prosecute in pollution cases where there is substantial damage to the resource. Settlements are negotiated with the parties involved.

**S: *The Commission should increase environmental protection activities.***

**R:** 67 percent agreed/strongly agreed while 11 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed.

**A:** The Commission will continue to work with DER and other agencies to write permits that are protective of aquatic resources. The Commission will also continue to investigate and receive compensation for pollution incidents.

**S: *Mandatory boating education should be pursued.***

**R:** 71 percent agreed/strongly agreed while 9 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed.

**A:** The Commission continues to investigate this idea because protecting the resource users is one of our goals. Legislation will have to be enacted.

**S: *Increase fines and penalties.***

**R:** 68 percent agreed/strongly agreed while 16 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed.

**A:** Legislation has been proposed and introduction of this bill is pending.

**S: *Increase non-resident fees.***

**R:** 66 percent agreed/strongly agreed while 17 percent disagreed/strongly disagreed.

**A:** Senate Bill 775 has been signed by Governor Ridge. The bill increases the cost of a non-resident general fishing license from \$25 to \$32.25.

Some other suggestions made at the public meetings are also being considered for Commission action. The Commission is seeking even more input on tailoring our programs to meet the needs and expectations of our customers.

We are extremely interested in knowing what is important to the anglers and boaters of Pennsylvania, so we plan to conduct a general public survey this year. The survey will provide accurate, timely information that we can use to tailor our programs to meet the needs and expectations of you, our customers. I look forward to seeing the results of this effort. I want to thank the individuals who participated in our nine regional workshops. I look forward to receiving additional user input in the user survey we have undertaken, and I will continue actively to solicit user input.



**Peter A. Colangelo**

*Executive Director  
Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*

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# Pennsylvania ANGLER

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*This issue's cover, photographed by Mark A. Nale, shows Frank Nale releasing an 18 1/2-inch brown trout.*

## 13th WCO Class

This August 21, some 20 new WCO (waterways conservation officer) trainees, "cadets," the Commission's largest WCO class ever, will report to municipal police officer's training school at Indiana University, in Butler. This 15-week session is the first phase of the Commission's training new WCOs.

"This part of the training includes the basics that any police officer needs, whether the officer enforces Pennsylvania's Vehicle Code, Crimes Code, or the Fish and Boat Code," says Jeff Bridi, Commission Bureau of Law Enforcement Assistant to the Director and Training Officer. "After the trainees complete this course, they report to the Commission's Stackhouse School, in Bellefonte, where they undergo five months of more specific training. Here they will also be assigned to a WCO in the field for a month or two of on-the-job training."

Bridi says that after graduation from the Stackhouse training, tentatively next June, the new WCOs are assigned to vacant field districts, or they could be assigned to seasonal positions, mainly for boat law enforcement.

"The quality of training our WCOs receive today is higher than ever before," Bridi says. "Training to become a WCO is also longer than ever before. Requirements for the job specify only that applicants have a high school diploma or the equivalent, but most WCOs have at least some college or a bachelor's degree. They have to be well-rounded people because being a WCO encompasses a wide variety of skills."

Bridi says that most everyone also has had some military experience. "It helps prepare people for this kind of work and gives them the edge for the personal discipline the job requires."

WCOs currently on the job also continue their training. Legal changes, new tactics, refresher courses, human relations techniques and certification updates in several areas make training a vital part of current WCO activities.

"Years ago," Bridi says, "when a person became a WCO, it was, 'Here's a badge and a gun. Now go to your job in that district.' We've certainly come a long way."

—*Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.*





# Morning Hatches

## in Midsummer

by Charles R. Meck

No anglers crowded the fertile pools that flowed just off the paved road along Elk Creek just outside Hills Grove in north-central Pennsylvania. Just three months before young and old alike huddled almost shoulder to shoulder on these productive stretches and on its scenic tributary, Hoagland Branch, to catch

early season trout. Now deer and raccoon tracks constitute the only marks you'll find along the stream. Water levels on this freestone stream have dropped dramatically from their spring levels. Few Keystone State anglers fish Elk this late in the year—it's early August. Anglers rationalize that besides low water, Elk Creek holds sparse summer hatches and fewer trout. Wrong!

I'll never forget the first time I fished Elk Creek in early August. I traveled there one early August evening in 1988 to fish with Denny Renninger of Hills Grove. Denny fly fished on Elk Creek while I watched. Then we headed up Hoagland Branch to look for summer hatches. If you've ever fished Hoagland Branch you already know about this small but picturesque and productive freestone stream. At each of the small bridges that we crossed on this scenic trout stream we stopped to look for hatches. I noticed several spider webs along the bridges and saw several mayflies still wiggling to free themselves. When I inspected the web more closely I saw several trico duns. Trico duns on Hoagland Branch? No way! Tricos inhabit more slow, open waters—you'll even find good hatches on state freestone streams—but not on the well-canopied Hoagland Branch—but you do!

Tricos duns emerge and spinners fall in early morning on those early August days, so I delayed a trip to Wilkes-Barre so I could fish on Elk and Hoagland the next morning to see just how many tricos appeared. I

arrived on Elk Creek the next morning just before 7:00 a.m. A heavy morning fog almost enshrouded the stream from view. Several locals drove past me and wondered whether I had lost

*Blue-winged olive*



*Bushkill Creek, Monroe County*

photos-Charles R. Meck





*Little Juniata River, Huntingdon County*

my sanity as I stood by the stream with my right hand in a saluting positioning scanning the area 10 to 20 feet above the stream for tricos.

Right there—in early morning—I saw thousands of glistening wings moving back and forth just 10 feet above the surface of this small freestone stream. I hurried to Hoagland Branch and headed to a pool near one of the bridges where I saw tricos the evening before. There I also spotted a decent swarm above the riffle at the head of the pool. Soon two trout fed on spent spinners now entering the pool.

I felt like a true explorer that morning, certain that few fly fishers before me had ever fished this small hatch on an August morning on this picturesque mountain stream. Two trout took my Trico imitation before I left Hoagland Branch that muggy August morning.

I traveled for more than a year through the state and visited more than 130 streams. On at least 50 of those streams I found trico hatches. Trico hatches appear throughout all corners of the state. They emerge on limestone streams in the southeast like Bushkill Creek in Easton. On that fertile stream Rich Keesler and I found great trico spinner falls and cooperative trout. Rich met me on Bushkill Creek one early August morning to fish a trico spinner fall. Even though we encountered cloudy water caused by a storm the day before, we saw a heavy hatch and some trout feeding on the spinners. Rich Keesler fishes the trico hatch frequently throughout the summer.

For years the best trico hatch in the state appeared on Falling Springs Branch near Chambersburg. Fly fishers in the area like John Newcomer, Bugs Stevens and Bill White looked forward to August mornings when spectacular trico spinner falls occurred on this limestone stream. They remember when clouds of trico spinners hovered above the surface almost daily and dozens of streambred trout took up feeding positions to feed on these midgets.

Recently, however, the trico hatch intensity has declined alarmingly on Falling Springs. Three concerned groups—the Falling Springs Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the Falling Springs Greenway and the Commission—have joined forces to promote a better fishery. They have worked diligently on stream access and stream improvement projects and both have contributed to a noticeable turnaround of hatches and trout.

As I said earlier, you find trout streams that hold respectable trico hatches scattered throughout all areas of the state. One should be within easy reach of you. Freestone streams in the northeast like Brodhead and Bowman creeks hold fishable hatches. Streams of the southeast like the Tulpehocken, Quittapahilla, West Valley and Donegal creeks also have decent trico hatches. Even in northwestern Pennsylvania you can see tricos on Thompson and Caldwell creeks. Look for hatches on southwestern streams like Yellow Creek in Bedford County.

What tricos lack in size they make up in numbers. I usually use a size 20 short-shank hook to copy the mayfly. Even though tricos never attain any great size, they sometimes appear in heavy numbers and bring trout to the surface.

Tricos have many unusual emergence characteristics. For example, male and female duns don't appear at the same time. Males usually emerge from 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. Females usually begin appearing on the surface around daylight and continue for a couple of hours. On hot midsummer days female duns appear and spinners fall early in the morning. On some hot, muggy days the trico hatch might end before 9:00 a.m. On cool, overcast days the spinner fall might last for several hours. On cool September mornings I've seen spinners fall as late as 11:00 a.m.

Plan your trico fishing accordingly. If weather forecasters predict a hot morning, you should appear for the hatch by 7:00 a.m. On cooler mornings expect the hatch later and more protracted.

*What tricos lack in size they make up in numbers.  
I usually use a size 20 short-shank hook to copy the mayfly.  
Even though tricos never attain any great size, they sometimes  
appear in heavy numbers and bring trout to the surface.*



# Morning Hatches in Midsummer

Unlike most other hatches you'll encounter, male trico spinners fall to the surface in fishable numbers. Usually females fall first. Then you encounter a period when some females and males fall spent, followed finally by all male spinners.

No matter where you live in the state, you can enjoy some great midsummer fly fishing in early morning on many of our great Keystone waters—and without the crowds of early season. But you'll find more than just trico hatches in the morning. If you arrive early enough on many streams, you can fish over quality blue quill hatches.

Whether you fly fish Elk, Fishing or Spruce creeks, or the Little Juniata River, in central Pennsylvania on August mornings you'll often encounter great blue quill hatches. Many other quality streams throughout the state also hold good midsummer blue quills.

Add a cool, overcast midsummer morning to the equation and you might experience a day unlike any you've ever encountered. That's what happened last summer on the Little Juniata River. I arrived on the stream a half-mile above Barree by 6:00 a.m. looking for any sign of a trico hatch. Just eight weeks before I fly fished this same section during a green drake hatch. However, in late May, when the green drake appears, the river seems to hold as many anglers as it does trout. This time, in early August, not one other angler appeared. The morning evolved into a downright chilly one. For more than 15 minutes I scanned the surface for emerging trico duns but saw none. I did, however, see dozens of darker slightly larger mayflies emerging at the head of the pool. I examined the dark-gray insect as it floated past me and quickly tied on a size 18 Blue Quill. Trout took up feeding positions that morning and fed throughout the entire pool and extended riffle above. Trout took the Blue Quill imitation readily and often.

By 10:00 a.m., after 12 trout took the pattern, I noticed a second, larger mayfly appearing on the surface. First, just a few of these bigger mayflies appeared. Then more and more appeared until this laggard emerger appeared in heavier numbers than the blue quill. I soon tied on a size 16 Blue-Winged Olive Dun and began casting to new risers. This second hatch emerged for more than two hours. More than a dozen more trout took this pattern before the hatch ended.

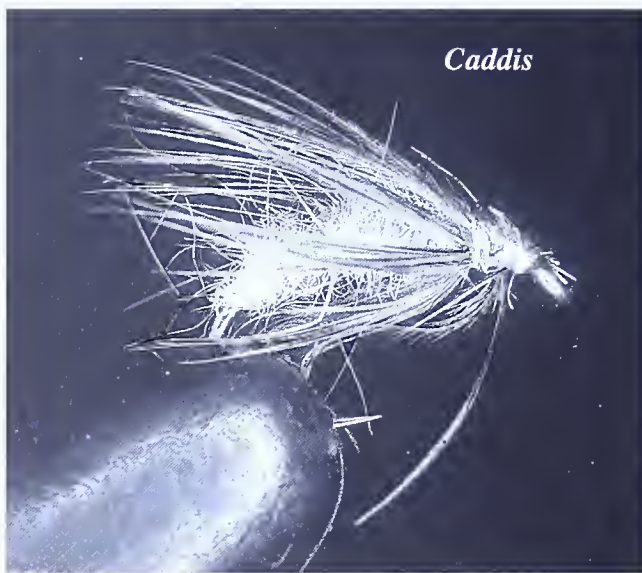
Blue quills and blue-winged olive duns emerged on that early August day for four hours. Probably the cool, overcast morning expanded those midsummer morning hatches and helped delay the mayflies from escaping quickly from the surface. I ended that morning with dozens of rising trout and great hatches. Remember, all this action took place on a midsummer morning with not one other angler on the river.

Select any of dozens of other productive trout waters throughout the state and you'll also find heavy hatches of blue-winged olives appearing on midsummer mornings. Streams like Pine Creek above Jersey Shore and the Delaware River in the northeast host blue-winged olive hatches in late May. But other productive trout waters like Elk Creek and Fishing Creek, both in central Pennsylvania, boast sporadic morning hatches of blue-wings throughout the summer.

Mayflies make up only a part of the feeding supply for trout on those midsummer mornings. On many streams and rivers in the state you'll find the likes of caddis flies and crane flies appearing at that time of year. For years on Spring and Bald Eagle creeks I've fished over emerging downwings almost every

midsummer morning. Paul Kurincak of Carmichaels and I recently fly fished on Spring Creek one late summer morning. Paul brought a friend along, Gordon Moon, from London, England. Gordon had never fly fished in the states before. He fished only infrequently on England's many private trout waters. Throughout that morning on Spring Creek Gordon continuously commented on the lack of public trout fishing in England and how lucky we were in the states with our many open streams.

We arrived on the lower end of Spring Creek below Bellefonte, expecting to fish almost exclusively over trico spinners. Before the morning ended, however, we rummaged through our fly boxes searching desperately for any pattern that would closely copy emerging green caddis and tan crane fly imitations. For more than two hours trout fed in riffles on



a sporadic hatch of size 16 green caddis flies. Then near noon a light-tan crane fly appeared on a long glide. More than 20 trout took up feeding positions for the crane flies. Although I have only watched fishable crane fly hatches on a handful of state streams, trout frequently and consistently feed on crane flies on Spring Creek.

You still don't think that crane fly patterns deserve a place in your fly box? Just ask Steve Sywensky, an expert fly tier and fly fisher from Lemont in central Pennsylvania, about the importance of crane flies on Spring Creek. Steve ties thousands of flies commercially, has developed a dynamite crane fly pattern and fishes this hatch quite often. The pattern looks like a delta-wing caddis with a very thin tan or yellow body, ginger hackle for legs and light-dun hackle point wings. Steve says this same pattern works well as a copy of a sulphur during that hatch. Steve ties the imitation on a size 14 short-shank hook.

"If another insect appears, trout switch quickly from the crane fly to the other food," Steve says. He's seen examples where trout fed voraciously on crane flies in May, until a hatch of sulphurs appeared. Steve related how the trout quickly switched to the sulphurs and completely ignored any crane fly floating past them.

"Crane flies take on far more importance on cool, drizzly midsummer days," Sywensky recounts. On these inclement days he's witnessed tremendous morning hatches of these downwings. If the dry fly he has created ever fails him, Steve uses a soft-hackle wet fly just under the surface.

What do you plan to do this August? Have you quit fly fishing for the year because you feel most major hatches have ended? Do you want to see some good morning hatches this year? How about fishing pressure? You'll see few other anglers in August. Just visit one of the many state streams that hold mayfly, caddis fly or crane fly hatches and enjoy those morning hatches in midsummer.



# On the Water

with Robert L. Petri

## The Life in My Closet

I have a closet full of angling mementos. Sometimes when the whim is on me and I wonder where I've been, I visit them. They are always waiting for me in the dark, only wishing to be brought out and considered one more time. All are inanimate objects, but in a very special way, all are alive. If you promise not to call someone to take me away, I might even admit that they talk to me from time to time. Here are some of the things they say.

There is a sturdy old medium-action spinning rod with a soiled grip and gold-plated hardware that has chipped and faded over time. In its day, it was the top of the line. It speaks to me about my youth—the paper route whose proceeds I used to buy it, the many, many days when I carried it in search of bass down the creek behind the house. Summer afternoons spent wading in over the top of my hip boots, swatting mosquitoes and deer flies, catching bullfrogs and even occasionally a bass. Moonlit nights when my mother would leave the porch light on until I finally wandered home.

There is a cheap, first-generation graphite fly rod with a broken tip. It tells me about my discovery of small streams, wild trout and serious fly fishing as a new college graduate. Its been whacked against the limbs of every tree along every small brookie stream in Crawford and Warren counties. It finally gave up the ghost when we walked together off an eight-foot cliff in the North Carolina Blue Ridge. I broke my finger and damaged my pride. It gave its life. Like the man who can't part with an old hunting dog, I keep it around more for the good it has done than for any it's likely to do in the future.

There is an old tackle box with a broken hinge, its plastic frame warped by too much direct sunlight. It tells a story about literally hundreds of float trips on French Creek, Conneaut Creek, the Clarion River and a dozen other waterways in search of smallmouth bass. Gliding over sharp rapids on Pine Creek near Cammel. Rounding the bend into the rising sun on a rocky section of the Clarion near Hallton. Sunburn and shore lunches under the cool canopy of hemlocks on a high bank along the upper Allegheny.

On the inside are the tools of the trade—row upon row of small crankbaits with chips of paint missing and bent trebles from being bounced off too many rocks and unceremoniously ripped out of too many log jams over the years. Here is the shallow-diver crayfish lure that took the 20-incher on Oil Creek, and the twin-propeller surface lure that still bears the teeth marks of the big pike from French Creek.

The tackle boxes' comrade in arms, the old ABS canoe, rests behind my brother's garage. Patched with just about every adhesive substance known to man, it passes the seasons in silence, now covered seasonally with the heavy snows of Erie County winters, now resting comfortably on warm, spring afternoons. I visit it from time to time. It's too large to fit in my closet.

Back behind the tackle box and underneath the pile of hip boots and waders that are beyond repair rests an old green camo crusher hat. I need to take a few stitches in the circular ribbon above the brim. It's coming loose. It has been my cold-weather



*Fishermen's Paradise, 1950s.*

companion on the water for more than a decade. Its woolen felt construction keeps my head warm and dry in all but the most foul weather on the shale-bottom steelhead streams of Erie County. It has a wide, 360-degree brim that cups sound to enhance my failing hearing. Oh sure, because of the wide brim, the hat occasionally leaves my head of its own accord during a good gust of wind. But it floats, and you have to take the good with the bad. I take good care of it.

Oh, and here is my first fly tying vise. I bought it with paper route money in 1964 from Herter's. If you are old enough to remember George and his telephone book-sized catalogs from the 1960s, you will recall that according to George, he personally invented almost everything having to do with fishing. What he didn't invent had been developed by someone else from a notion that he had originated. He must have been quite a guy. I wish I could have met him.

The vise weighed in at around four pounds. It held hooks from size 10 up to infinity. Anything smaller disappeared in its sturdy cast-iron jaws. Today, I believe you would need a permit to own such a formidable chunk of metal. I tied my first flies in George's vise. One was a Woolly Worm with a black body and grizzly hackle. I rode my bike down to Lake LeBoeuf and caught 45 bluegills on it. On the way home, I decided I was A.J. McLane, Joe Brooks and George Leonard Herter all wrapped up in one, and that I would live forever. I was 13 years old.

There are many other things in my closet. An old and worn map of the wilds of central Quebec, my copy of "Trout Fishing in Pennsylvania," carefully removed from the April 1983 *Pennsylvania Angler* where it first appeared. Its pages have been laminated to withstand the rigors of time. Here and there, mustard stains and the remnants of squashed caddis flies dot the pages. Each of those has a memory attached to it as well.

I suppose if I showed you my closet, you might decide I was a packrat, guilty of deliberate hoarding in the first degree. I see it differently. I am a curator, the keeper of a living history of the things I love. My closet is a link to my past, and the future home of the memories from an angling life for all my days to come.





# Piedmont Panfish

by Mike Bleech

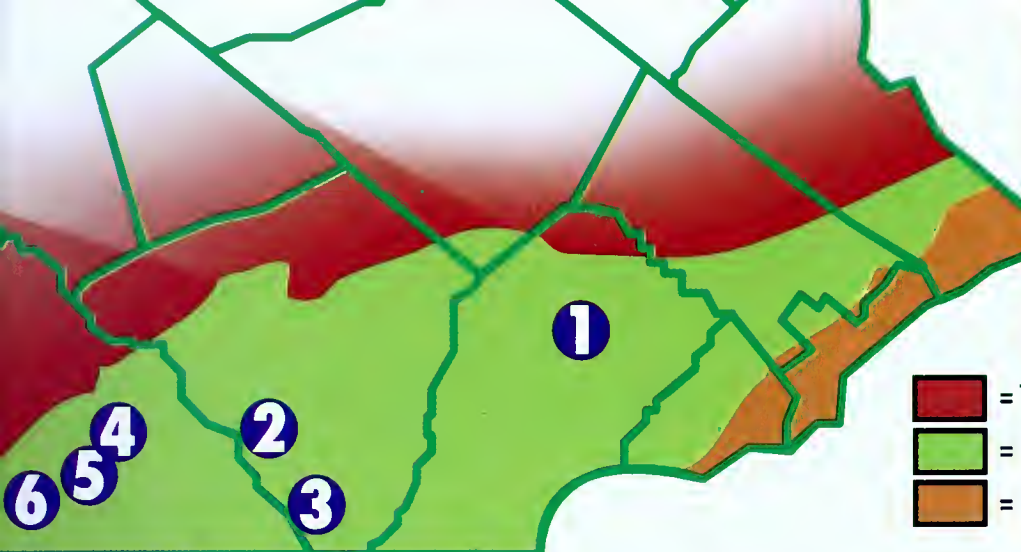


*Crappies, bluegills and yellow perch are all found in these waterways, and fishing lasts year-round.*



**The Pennsylvania Piedmont consists of a slice of our southeastern corner, including the southern half of York County, most of Lancaster, Delaware and Chester counties, and parts of Montgomery and Bucks counties.**





## Piedmont Panfish Hotspots

1. Marsh Creek Lake, Marsh Creek State Park, Chester County
2. Lake Aldred, Lancaster County
3. Conowingo Pool, Lancaster County
4. Lake Williams, York County
5. Lake Redman, York County
6. Lake Marburg, Codorus State Park, York County

- = TRIASSIC LOWLAND
- = PIEDMONT
- = COASTAL PLAIN

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und.

"They're having a good week. They're hammering the crappies, perch and bluegills," said the man behind the counter. "Just head straight down that road and you'll see 50 people fishing for crappies."

I stuck around the tackle shop just long enough to learn that the local anglers were using grubs and fathead minnows for bait. Indeed, a lot of anglers were crowded around the first bridge over a bay of Marsh Creek Lake, and they were catching a few respectable crappies and very nice bluegills. I was surprised to see some of them keeping crappies smaller than bluegills they were releasing.

Bluegills are my favorite panfish for eating. That, of course, is just a matter of personal taste. However, inch for inch bluegills have more meat. I'll fillet six-inch bluegills, but I set a limit of nine or 10 inches on crappies. And after a day of good panfishing, by which time I usually have a few packages of fillets in my freezer, I increase my minimum size limit on crappies accordingly until I run out of fillets.

One of the marvelous fringe benefits of my job is that there is no need for me to stockpile fillets in my freezer. I generally have fresh fish. I do, nonetheless, like to stay a couple of packages ahead. But rather than eating more than my share of crappies, I prefer to put away bluegill fillets. Crappies have become one of the more desirable fish in Pennsylvania. In many lakes their numbers are trimmed considerably by anglers, and slabs are hard to come by.

Conservation Lake special regulations can, I hope, create situations where we can catch 12-inch crappies with some regularity. Do Pennsylvania anglers prefer quality fishing to quantity? From what I hear at special regulations waters most of us do.

### Marsh Creek Lake

Marsh Creek Lake, the centerpiece of Marsh Creek State Park, lies just off the Pennsylvania Turnpike in northern Chester County. It covers 535 acres.

Rather than joining the crowd, not because I do not enjoy the company, but instead because I was hoping to catch and release larger crappies, I walked a bit farther from the road to a couple of sticks that protruded from the lightly stained water. Besides the cover that I guessed was below those sticks, I figured the water would be a few degrees warmer there, in a windward little bay, than in the flowing water at the bridge.

My guessing and figuring paid off, not tremendously, mind you, but enough. I caught and released a few dozen crappies, including a few in the 10-inch to 12-inch class.

This would be a recurring pattern in my search for panfish

in Pennsylvania's piedmont lakes. Anglers seemed more concerned with where other anglers were than with looking for something better. They clustered around the customary hotspots, ignoring some places nearby that looked like classic crappie cover.

Strange, I thought also, that I did not see anyone else fishing with jigs, except for baited jigs still-fished under bobbers. My catch, which averaged noticeably larger than what I observed other anglers catching, came on an orange/brown tube jig rigged on a 1/16-ounce red leadhead, retrieved very slowly but steadily near the bottom. I caught crappies by starting the retrieve as soon as the jig hit the water. But after experimenting by counting down the jig, I discovered that I caught larger crappies by starting the retrieve after a four-count.

All of this does indicate one of the generalizations about panfish anglers—that they treat their sport less aggressively, or in a more leisurely manner than they might pursue other gamefish like bass or trout. I use the word "they" rather than "we" because I am one of the apparent few who chases bluegills, crappies, yellow perch and other panfish with as much enthusiasm and energy as other fish. And as with other fish, extra effort usually pays dividends—which is not to say that I don't spend a sunny afternoon now and then watching a bobber and not caring a bit if there is a jerk at the other end of the line, too.

### Lake Aldred, Conowingo Pool

The broad Susquehanna River flows from the north, bringing its colder water, so during spring and fall the impoundments, 2,400-acre Lake Aldred and the 6,000-acre Conowingo Pool, are apt to be noticeably cooler than smaller lakes in the piedmont. The river may be swollen with rain or snowmelt. But when conditions are right, panfishing in these large impoundments can be superb.

Crappie populations tend to be cyclic. After enjoying some fine crappie fishing in Conowingo Pool during the mid-1980s, the population dipped. Lately, though, it appears to be rebounding.

My late-winter visit to Conowingo Pool coincided with good water conditions, albeit very cold water. Starting below the Peach Bottom power generating plant, where the water was warmed by discharge from the plant, I fished down the shoreline, concentrating my casts wherever I saw cover. For a long while it looked like my timing, location or techniques were bad. Then, finally, in the



# Piedmont Panfish

branches of a fallen tree in a small cut I found crappies that liked my jig—a one-inch pearl-chartreuse split-tail grub on a 1/16-ounce red leadhead.

For the next couple of hours it seemed as if I could do no wrong. I found crappies everywhere I fished, not in great numbers, but there were never 10 minutes between crappies, and sometimes hits came in brief flurries. A few of the crappies were better than 10 inches long. I also hit a couple of schools of respectable-sized yellow perch.

Lake Aldred is probably not quite as good for crappies as the Conowingo Pool. Like the Conowingo Pool, fallen trees provide some of the better fishing. Also check stumps on a sunken island on the Lancaster County side.

In both of these impoundments be very careful of rocks just under the surface that eat propellers and lower units. Good maps are available, but they don't pinpoint individual obstacles. Because of fluctuating water level, depths on the maps are difficult to convert to ambient depths. Boat cautiously.

## Lake Redman, Lake Williams

Built as water supply reservoirs for the city of York, Lake Redman and Lake Williams are leased to York County as parks. Only a dam separates 290-acre Lake Redman from 240-acre Lake Williams. The county park operates a launch ramp and boat rentals at Lake Redman.

"Lake Williams is a lot more peaceful with car-tops only," says facility manager Mike Fobes. "You can get over there in a canoe and hardly see anybody."

The bottoms of both lakes were clear-cut before they were filled, so there is not much in the way of fish cover. To remedy this situation Fobes is working with the Fish and Boat Commission to install artificial cover. The Commission provides technical assistance and some funding.

"After this year we'll have 90 fish cribs in three different sites," he says.

All of the cribs installed so far are in Lake Redman. Maps showing the locations of the cribs are available at the boat rental building. The



*Lake Marburg, York County*

Fish and Boat Commission will mark locations for cribs at Lake Williams soon. The cribs are constructed in a pyramid shape with 2x4s, four feet long.



*Conowingo Pool, York County*



***This area is densely populated and intensively farmed. Fishing pressure is heavy. Yet, there is good panfishing in several lakes, notably Lake Marburg, Lake Redman, Lake Williams, Lake Aldred, the Conowingo Pool and Marsh Creek Lake.***

Fobes has found a lot of fish activity around the cribs using a sonar/fishfinder.

Another type of artificial cover, plastic trees, has not been as successful. Sediment deposits collapsed the plastic limbs.

Lakes Williams and Redman offer good fishing for crappies, bluegills and yellow perch, though crappies are the main attraction. Even though last winter there were only about three days of decent ice, during colder winters ice fishing is some of the best fishing of the year. Fobes notes that he does not get much chance to fish during the busy summer, so he fishes these lakes mostly through the ice.

Several special fishing and boating regulations apply to these lakes. Both are under Conservation Lake special regulations. Check page 41 of your 1995 *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws* for details on minimum sizes and daily limits. Only electric motors are allowed at both.

At Lake Williams, only cartop boats can be launched, bank fishing is allowed only at designated areas, and night fishing is not permitted.

At Lake Redman, bank fishing is allowed anywhere except in the small bay where the boat ramp and boat rental are located. The boat launch is open to anglers for night fishing on Fridays and Saturdays.

While you are in the area take time to visit Richard M. Nixon County Park. This quiet park contains a fish and wildlife museum featuring mounted specimens from all over the world displayed in natural-appearing dioramas. It is a spectacular treat that every outdoors enthusiast will enjoy. It is located near the village of Jacobus.

## **Lake Marburg**

Lake Marburg was completed in 1966 by the P.H. Glatfelter Paper Company. It was the first such project in the Commonwealth designed to serve the water supply needs of a private industry and a town, and to provide public recreation. The dam is owned by the paper company. However, the 1,275-acre lake and surrounding land make up Codorus State Park.

The park campground is open from the second Friday in April through the third Sunday in October. While you are at the park be sure to visit the park office to see its diorama display of mounted fish that inhabit Lake Marburg.

"Depth makes a lot of difference in this lake," says Dennis Ressler, a Shippensburg angler I met on the lake. "They're funny here. But when you get into them, you really get them!"

Ressler and I had plenty of time to chat, because it was not one of those times when we got into them. After lunch I drove into Hanover to speak with Gordon Brady, who operates a tackle shop.

"Crappies have been very plentiful for the past year," says Brady. "Average size has been 10 inches, 12 inches. We've seen some up to 13 inches. Last fall there was a massive school of crappies under the first bridge."

Fall crappie action began in mid-September and lasted until January. It got under way again in mid-March and continued

through May. The hot bait rigs were shad darts tipped with small fathead minnows, and worms fished beneath slip bobbers. The slip bobber rigs accounted for a lot of perch.

Some of the favorite places for panfishing during fall and spring are near three bridges along PA Route 216. These bridges are referred to as the first, second and third bridge, counting from the bridge closest to Hanover.

Asked where he suggests anglers who are unfamiliar with the lake try for crappies, Brady says, "I'd send them either to the first or third bridge. My theory is they are much broader expanses so there's more area to fish. Some people tell me the bluegills are bigger at the third bridge."

In addition to crappies, Lake Marburg has a good supply of bluegills and yellow perch. You can find bluegills through summer and fall in weed beds. During spring they are caught at the bridges along with crappies and perch.

Some very big perch have been caught here. But other than during the often brief ice fishing season, they are not generally targeted by anglers. The winter of 1993-94 was particularly good. Some 15-inch perch were pulled through the ice. But last winter there was not enough ice fishing to mention.

"Some of the people who are catching the bigger yellow perch are fishing for walleyes or bass," Brady says.

Faced with the densest human population in the state, these manmade lakes in our small piedmont region provide surprisingly good panfish action. Crappies, bluegills and yellow perch are quite abundant and frequently large, especially the perch. You can find good panfishing year-round. But if you want to avoid the non-fishing crowds, try these lakes during fall, winter or early spring.



## **The Pennsylvania Piedmont**

I wonder how many Pennsylvanians know that we have a piedmont, or even what a piedmont is.

A piedmont is a plain at the foot of a mountain range. The piedmont that lies between the Appalachian Mountains and the Atlantic Coastal Plain has a rolling appearance caused by millions of years of erosion. The piedmont is thin in Pennsylvania, getting progressively wider southward.

In Pennsylvania the piedmont consists of a slice of our southeastern corner, including the southern half of York County, most of Lancaster, Delaware, and Chester counties, and the southern ends of Montgomery and Bucks counties, except for a sliver of Bucks, Montgomery, Philadelphia and Delaware counties along the Delaware River that are coastal plain.

This area is densely populated and intensively farmed. Fishing pressure is heavy. Yet, there is good panfishing in several lakes, notably Lake Marburg, Lake Redman, Lake Williams, Lake Aldred, the Conowingo Pool and Marsh Creek Lake. These are all manmade lakes. There are no natural lakes in this area.—MB.



# Lake Williams

## LARGEMOUTH BASS

by Seth Cassell

Lake Williams is one of southeastern Pennsylvania's sleeper bass lakes. Located in central York County, Lake Williams is a 220-acre impoundment with Conservation Lake regulations. Created in 1912, the impoundment provides a water supply for the city of York. In addition, Lake Williams is part of the 1,625-acre William H. Kain Park, which also hosts Williams' sister lake, Lake Redman.

One of Lake Williams' greatest attributes is that it is rarely crowded or over-fished. Even with the Lake Williams great bass population, if 10 boats are on the water at one time, local anglers consider it a crowded day. Gasoline-powered boats are prohibited on Williams, which might explain why the lake's fishery is not substantially used. In addition, it has limited shoreline access and only cartop boats are permitted.

Mike Kaufmann, Fish and Boat Commission Area 6 Fisheries Manager, says, "Lake Williams has a very high largemouth bass population and it is one of the best largemouth bass lakes in southeastern PA. It is the place I point to when asked where to catch large bass in the region."

Before 1987, before Conservation Lake regulations were implemented, the Commission's survey of Lake Williams yielded 106 largemouths in the 12- to 15-inch range and only 53 largemouth over 15 inches. However, when Lake Williams was surveyed in 1992, results indicated 217 bass in the 12- to 15-inch range (a 159 percent increase) and 241 bass over 15 inches (a 355 percent increase).

It is evident that Conservation Lake regulations (which carry a 15-inch size limit) have dramatically improved the lake's fishing potential. But to further illustrate the quality of the Williams largemouth fishery, let's take a look at how Lake Williams compares with other bass lakes across the Commonwealth.

To be deemed an acceptable largemouth bass fishery by the Fish & Boat Commission, a lake must produce, through electrofishing surveys, an hourly catch rate of seven bass in the

12-inch to 15-inch range and two to three bass larger than 15 inches.

Impressively, Lake Williams has surpassed these standards, according to Commission surveys. Lake Williams survey results show an hourly catch rate of 29 bass in the 12-inch to 15-inch range (over four times the minimum) and 12.5 bass over 15 inches (five times the minimum). These impressive results certainly qualify Lake Williams as a top-notch bass lake.

Jim Selway, a veteran bass angler who frequents Lake Williams, finds it to be a consistent lake where anglers can catch plenty of largemouths, including some lunkers. The opportunity is available to catch bass in the 23-inch range, according to local anglers. But before an angler attempts catching these lunker bass, there is some information about Lake Williams needed to be learned.

### Hotspots

A well-known largemouth rendezvous is located at the upper portion of the lake where the spillway (from Lake Redman) enters Lake Williams. The spillway is a remarkable place to fish, and at times, the bass feed quite voraciously. Selway catches a tremendous amount of bass in the spillway during the season, and it has proved to be a very consistent spot for him.

The concrete-embanked spillway attracts fish because of the moving water and available dissolved oxygen, Selway says. Also, baitfish tend to gather in the spillway, which in turn attract largemouths, he says.

Because it's a proven bass haven, Selway fishes the spillway first during his visits to Lake Williams. "Work the shallows first, where there is a lot of cover. Then, if the shallows don't produce, move out into the deeper water," Selway says.

Outside the spillway, in the lake itself, anglers who wish to use deep-water tactics should head for the lower end of the lake. In the upper portion of Williams, where the spillway enters the





lake, the water is shallow—less than six feet deep in most places.

Steep shorelines are prevalent in the lower half of Williams, especially on the eastern side. Selway says that the bass hold in the deep water along these shorelines. “The bass like these steep shorelines because they provide the fish with deep water, cover, shade and cool temperatures,” Selway says.

Because there are many trees along the Lake Williams shoreline with branches that overhang to the water, casting can be difficult at times. So anglers might have to use imaginative casting techniques at certain locations. Many times the best method of fishing the shorelines is by casting side-arm beneath the overhanging branches. But because of the good fishing offered along the steep shorelines, the extra effort is well worth the hassle.

### Deep-water lures, tactics

“A pumpkinseed-colored plastic worm!” Selway says when asked which lure he finds most productive on Lake Williams.

Pumpkinseed-colored plastic worms are effective on Lake Williams for a number of reasons. Selway says that they are a versatile bait, imitating the waterway’s baitfish and crayfish. Lake Williams is known to have a large population of crayfish, and plastic worms that are colored to imitate these aquatic crustaceans (such as pumpkinseed) can prove to be deadly. Selway says that black is another productive color on Lake Williams.

Rig the plastic worm on a slider head and fish it with a slow jigging action, Selway says. “If there are largemouths in the vicinity, plastic worms seem to lure the bass.”

Plastic worms work especially well near steep shorelines. “The best way to hook a bass with a plastic worm is to cast toward the shoreline and let it sink to the bottom. Then, slowly retrieve it in a slow, methodical jigging action. If you feel the slightest tension, set the hook—you’re probably onto a bass,” Selway says.

If plastic worms don’t produce on Lake Williams, tie on a chrome-colored crankbait. Selway notes that this kind of lure sometimes entices an otherwise passive largemouth.

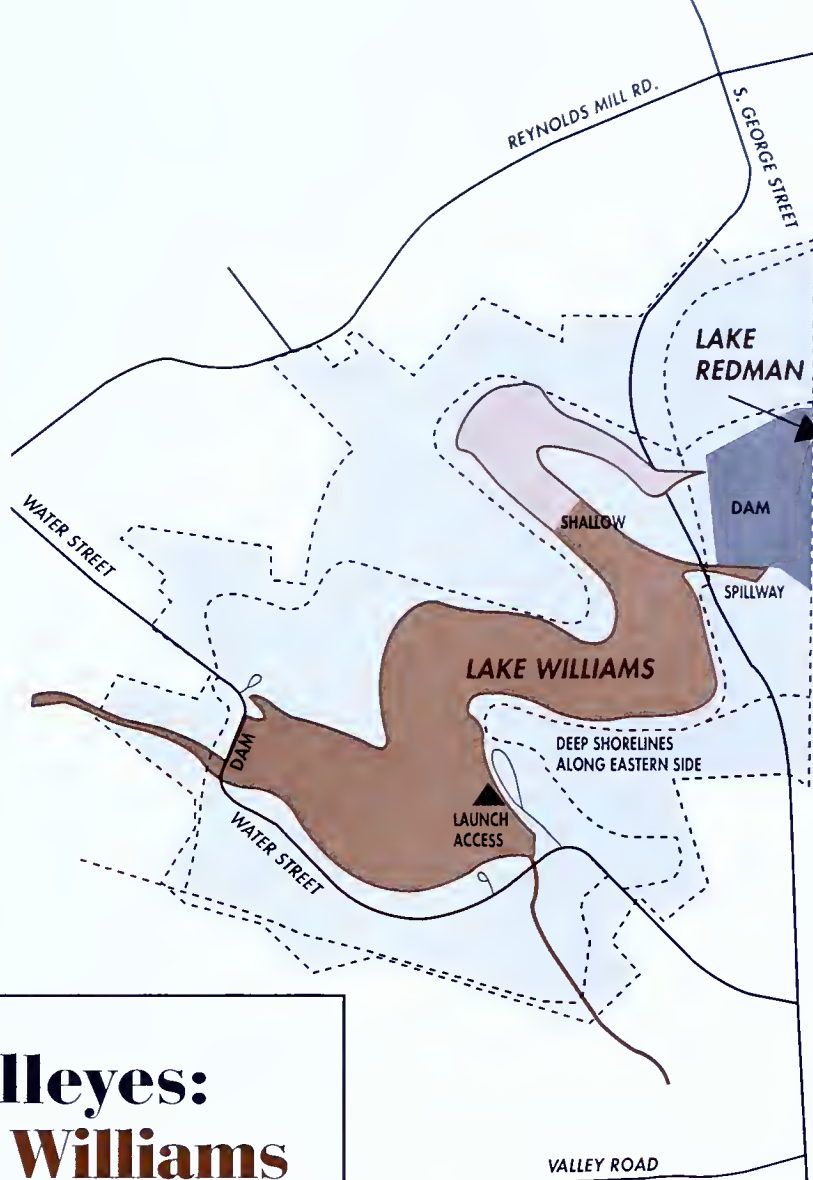
For this style of deep-water angling, it is best for bass fishermen to use ultralight tackle, Selway says. “When using sensitive tackle, anglers are more capable of detecting even the slightest strikes, especially when using plastic worms. I catch more largemouth on Lake Williams because of my proper use of light tackle.”

### Topwater lures, tactics

Stan Sulewski often fishes topwater lures on Lake Williams. According to Sulewski, topwater lures colored to match natural forage such as shad, crawfish, bluegills and perch are the most productive on Lake Williams. However, if he had to pick one color, he says, “I would definitely pick the shad-colored lure. It has proven to be a consistent producer for me.”

Cigar-shaped topwater lures do not produce on Lake Williams as they do on other local waters, says Sulewski. Popping lures work well on Lake Williams, he says.

Sulewski likes a technique he learned on Lake Williams and other local bass waters. He says when using topwater lures, don’t set the hook as soon as you notice a disturbance near the



## Walleyes: Lake Williams BONUS

An added bonus of fishing Lake Williams is having the opportunity to land one of the many walleyes that prosper in the lake. Because night fishing is prohibited on Williams, the population remains virtually untapped, and many leviathan walleyes end up dying of old age without ever being introduced to a fish hook.

bait. If you set the hook immediately, he says, you’ll probably lose the fish. Sulewski recommends giving the bass time to hit the bait and secure it in its mouth. He scores more by waiting until he feel the fish pulling on the rod. Then he sets the hook.

### Live bait tactics

The best live baits to use on Lake Williams are crayfish and minnows. Because Lake Williams is crawling with crayfish, a live crayfish worked slowly along the bottom can produce well. In addition to live crayfish, artificials that imitate crayfish work well, too.

Live minnows work best in the discharge channel because the discharge attracts baitfish, Selway says. Selway believes it is best, when fishing the channel, to present the minnows naturally. “Let the minnows do their own thing—don’t jerk them around. I have the most success when I just let the minnows move naturally.”

Lake Williams is certainly a fishery that has flourished under Conservation Lake regulations. Anglers now have the opportunity to cast their lines to virtually untouched lunker bass, which are a rare commodity in today’s lakes. Auspicious features such as excellent water quality, large bass, light fishing pressure, and proper management combine to make Lake Williams the unsung bass fishery of southeastern Pennsylvania.





# Panfish and the *Pocono Delaware*

by Ed Howey

From Milford Beach down to the I-80 bridge at the Water Gap, panfish flourish in countless backwaters, sloughs and eddies of this stretch of the Delaware River in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. Whether afloat or shorebound, panfish anglers can find willing schools of crappies, bluegills, rock bass and perch in these scenic waters. Here the river flows in a succession of long, slow pools and shallow riffles, with occasional narrow chutes of dangerous whitewater.

The panfish angler should concentrate on the slower water, the sloughs and backwaters along shorelines that offer shelter and forage.

Though springtime produces higher creel counts, the bigger fish hit in the fall. Crappies bigger than 10 inches are common. Would you believe the state crappie record actually exceeds four pounds? Fall bluegills run seven inches to 10 inches (another unbelievable record—two pounds, 9 ounces). Rock bass run eight to 10 inches but can be larger. And the autumn angler can anticipate a string of yellow perch in the 10- to 12-inch range. Ray “PeeWee” Serfass, longtime Delaware River guide, has seen clients boat 17-inch, two-pound perch in the fall.

Shoreline structure is the key to locating fall panfish. Crappies’ fondness for submerged wood—stumps, logs and brush—is well-known. They return to the same structure they visited in the spring. Bluegills seek similar surroundings, but closer to shore in somewhat shallower places. Look for rock bass where you would look for smallmouth bass—rocky shorelines, bottoms and ledges. Perch wander more widely than the other species, but sub-surface weedbeds are always a good bet.

Whether hooked on fly rod or spinning gear, light tackle adherents can find fun with Delaware panfish. Spinning rods in the range from 5 1/2 to 6 1/2 feet loaded with 2-pound or 4-pound monofilament are best. Fly rods from eight to nine feet long, designed for 6-weight floating or sink-tip line, handle most panfish situations. Fly gear difficulties are too much wind or excessive weight necessary to get the lure down where the fish are. When fishing from a boat I carry both kinds of tackle,

anticipating situations where one may be clearly superior to the other.

Small lures and baits get the call from successful panfish anglers. Spin fishermen favor black or yellow leadhead jigs in the 1/32-ounce to 1/8-ounce range tipped with tails in yellow, white or chartreuse, or with live minnows or grubs in the one-inch to 2 1/2-inch range. Spinner blades in 0 and 00 sizes are favored with the same color preferences as the jigs. Black-bladed lures rank high on the list of favorite spinners.

The fly rodder finds use for the full arsenal—wet flies, dry flies, streamers and popping bugs. Popping bugs should be in sizes 8 and 10. Yellow, white and black produce the most consistent results. All of the species hit poppers, but bluegills and rock bass are most willing. Crappies often come up to grab a popper, but perch rarely do. Attractor flies like the Royal Wulff and the Renegade should also be in sizes 8 and 10. Wet flies probably take more panfish than any other pattern. A cast of two that includes a subdued pattern like the Adams or Leadwing Coachman and a brighter pattern like the Green Weenie or the Sparkle Caddis Pupa is deadly for all species. Small streamers also work well, especially for perch. Favorite patterns are the Muddler, Mickey Finn, Black-Nosed Dace, and Clouser Minnow on sizes 8 and 10 hooks.

Live bait may be used with either fly or spinning tackle, but the latter is more convenient. Whether used alone or to tip a jig, live bait should produce more panfish than artificials. Hellgrammites, small shiners and garden worms or grubs almost always take fish.

Whether fishing artificials or live bait, choose your bobber carefully. No longer a simple float that bobs when a fish grabs your bait, the bobber has evolved into a sensitive device to suspend bait or lure at the proper depth and to permit anglers to “activate” artificial lures while still responding to tantalizing nibbles. Fly fishermen call their bobbers “strike indicators,” but they serve the same purpose as a bobber does for spin fishermen.

For spin fishermen bobbers work fine for depths under three feet, but beyond that the amount of line dangling makes the rig unwieldy if not downright unmanageable. When it’s necessary to fish deeper, a slip bobber system solves most of the problems.

The Pennsylvania and New Jersey shorelines of the Delaware offer striking differences, especially in the lower third of the river. On the New Jersey side the steep flanks of Kittatiny Mountain fall close to the river along most of the way, and the heavily forested mountainside supports the river’s claim to Wild and Scenic status, whereas the Pennsylvania side has experienced much more development. On both shores the stretch north from the S-curve at Bushkill is more remote with facilities—launch sites, rest areas and camping spots—more widely spaced.

Properly planned, a float trip down the river over a period of a few hours puts an angler onto more prime water than any other method, and in the fall the trip is worthwhile for the scenery alone. The fishing is a bonus. The table below indicates the approximate distance between launch facilities. Additional roadside access points are available to canoe floaters.

The more heavily developed Pennsylvania shore offers less support for Wild and Scenic status, but the upside is more launch sites for trailered boats, with five spotted along the river between the Water Gap and Milford Beach. The Smithfield Beach launch facility provides extensive parking for cars and trailers, visitor services and a concrete ramp wide enough to handle simultaneous launches.

Extensive private holdings on the Pennsylvania side chal-



lenge shorebound anglers, but picnic areas, launch facilities and roads running close to the river provide legal access. Take the US 611 exit off I-80 west of the toll bridge and follow River Road, then Freeman Road to stay close to the river up to the S-curve at Bushkill. Beyond Bushkill, side roads off US 209 offer the best access. From I-84 take the Milford exit to US 209 and reverse the process. To avoid lost time, explore the region beforehand with the help of good maps from the National Park Service centers for visitors.

The many islands in the river create sloughs and backwaters that form excellent panfish habitat. In the stretch from Labar Island, past Depew Island and Shawnee Island, panfish anglers can find some of the best spots on the river.

During warm weather watercraft traffic on the river is heavy,

but a 10mph speed limit is enforced except at the large Smithfield Beach pool, where a 35 mph speed is allowed to accommodate water skiers. It's best to avoid this spot in the warm weather. But as fall air temperatures cool the water the Smithfield Beach pool becomes a place for anglers to enjoy some great scenery and some fine fishing for the Pocono Delaware's bounty of panfish.

Float-trip anglers stopping to probe hotspots should figure on an average speed of a mile or so per hour. Primitive campsites are spotted along the river both on shore and on islands where canoeists are permitted to camp when the distance between launch and takeout requires it.

Reciprocal agreements make either state's license valid for fishing in the river from boat or from shore.

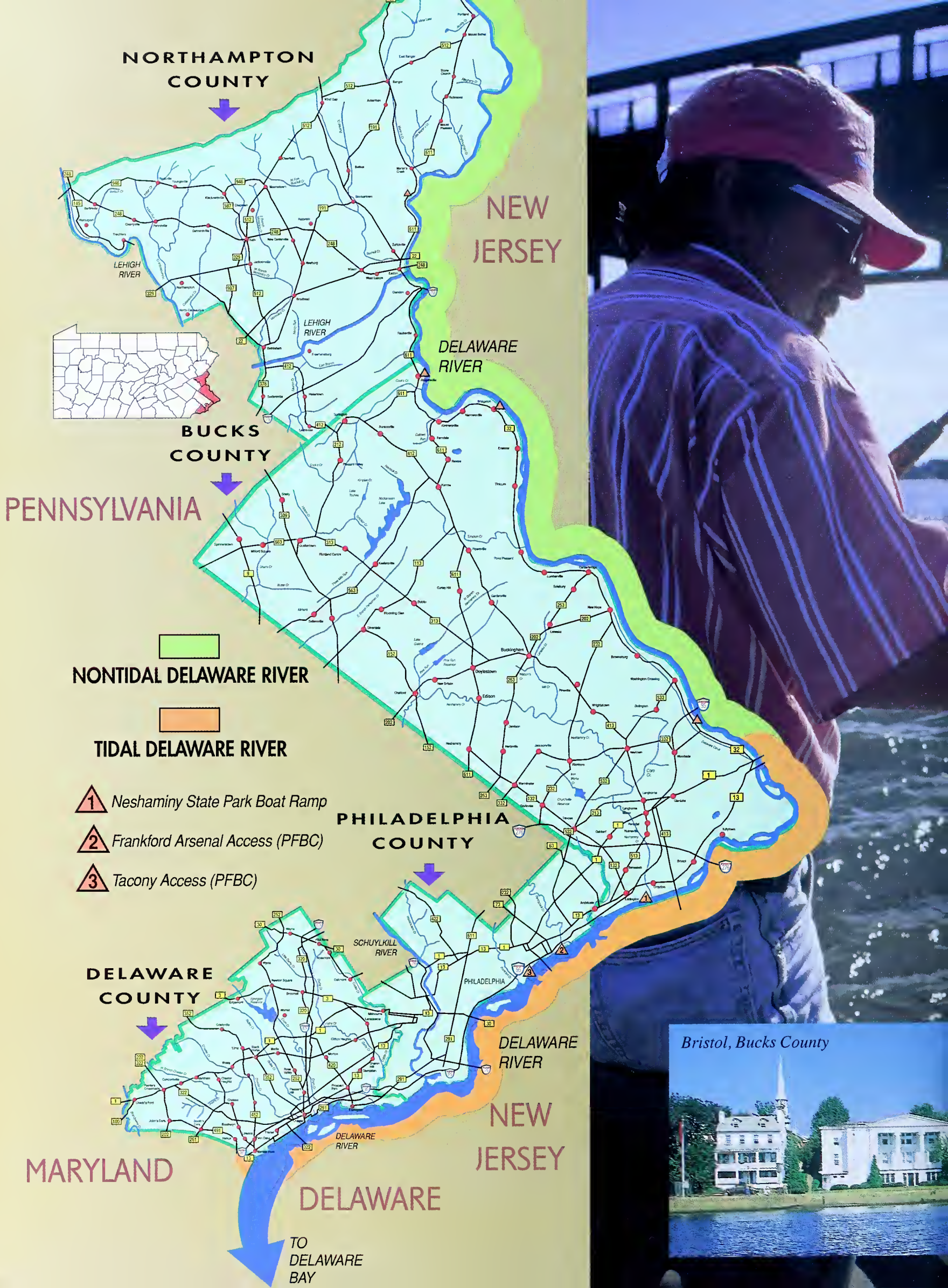
ANGLER



*Poppers and streamers lure panfish.*







NORTHAMPTON  
COUNTY

NEW  
JERSEY

DELAWARE  
RIVER

BUCKS  
COUNTY

PENNSYLVANIA

NONTIDAL DELAWARE RIVER

TIDAL DELAWARE RIVER

- 1 Neshaminy State Park Boat Ramp
- 2 Frankford Arsenal Access (PFBC)
- 3 Tacony Access (PFBC)

PHILADELPHIA  
COUNTY

DELAWARE  
COUNTY

DELAWARE

NEW  
JERSEY

TO  
DELAWARE  
BAY

Bristol, Bucks County







# Pennsylvania's

## Tidal Bass Fishing

by Darl Black

"Didn't we fish here a little over an hour ago and not catch a thing?" I asked Ed Hargraves as he wheeled his bass boat into a familiar-looking area.

"Yes, but we've returned to prove a point," he replied. "On tidal water every 20 minutes is like fishing a new body of water. Timing is everything. We were too early last time; the tide had not turned. We'll catch fish this time."

Extending from a backwater slough through a concrete embankment, only the top rim of the culvert pipe could be seen when we first stopped at the outflow shortly after sunrise. But now about half of the four-foot diameter pipe was clearly visible. Hargraves' first cast into the pipe resulted in a chunky largemouth. His second cast brought a second bass. I laid my camera down and picked up a rod. A third bass smacked the four-inch worm on my initial cast. Tidal bass fishing—it's an entirely different ballgame!

The periodic rise and fall of tides result from the gravitational pull by the moon and sun on the immense surface of the earth's oceans and inlets. The daily changes in water levels, occurring approximately every 12 hours, affect the behavior of aquatic creatures.

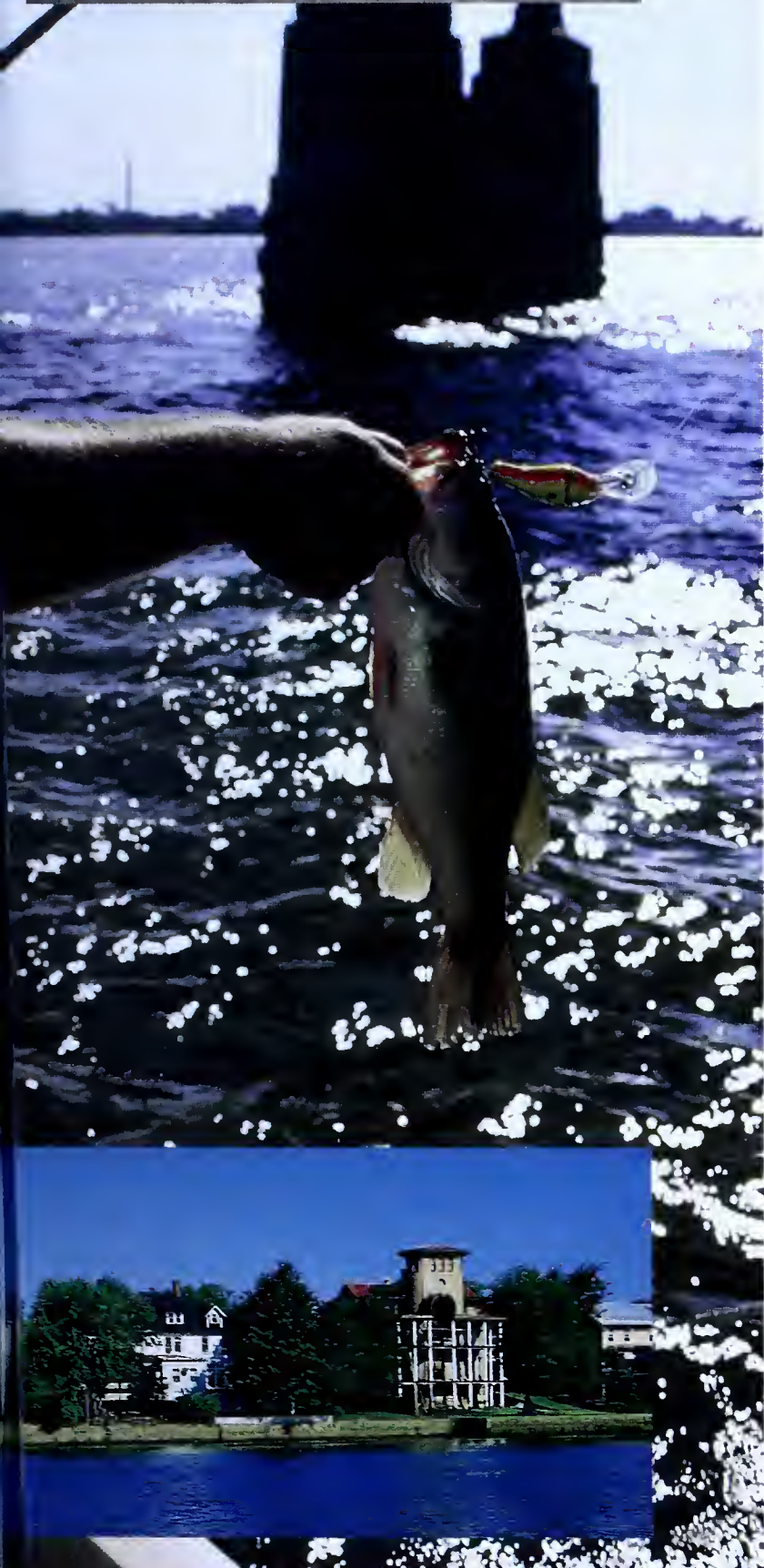
Tidal water bass fishing in Pennsylvania? Some anglers are scratching their heads wondering what this talk is about. They apparently forget that the lower portion of the Delaware River is under tidal influence.

Mentioning the Delaware River to most Pennsylvania anglers brings visions of springtime American shad fishing. Others may think about trout in the upper reaches or smallmouths in the middle reaches of the non-tidal section. But an inquiry about the sportfishing possibilities in the lower portion of the river near Philadelphia more often than not brings a shrug of the shoulders.

For many fishermen the lower "dirty Delaware" is not the picture they associate with bass angling. But a handful of southeastern anglers who regularly ride the river and play the tides know the true story: bass fishing on the Delaware today is hot.

### Return to the river

Ed Hargraves, past president of the American Bass Association of eastern Pennsylvania, had been after me for a couple of years



photos: Darl Black; map graphic: Ted Walle



# Pennsylvania's *Tidal* Bass Fishing

to fish the tidal Delaware with him. I took him up on it last summer. My only regret is not jumping on the invitation sooner.

The weather during the day we scheduled on the river did not hold much promise—at least from my traditional inland lake perspective. With dry high pressure, bright sun and bluebird skies, my hopes of connecting with bass were low.

However, I enjoy being proven wrong if doing so results in lots of fish caught. And wrong I was! When we quit fishing in the late afternoon, I had lost count of the largemouth bass that had fallen for our lures. As I said, tide-water bass fishing is unlike bass fishing on inland lakes. When the tide is right and the forage available, those bass could care less about so-called bad weather.

This was not my first outing on the tidal Delaware, but it was the first time I caught bass there. For three years during the early 1970s I lived in lower Bucks County only a few miles from the river. But as I learned on this return trip, the bass fishery in the lower Delaware today is far different from two decades ago. Unfortunately, many anglers are unaware of the changes.

"The tidal Delaware is one of the most underfished waterways in the state," says Sam Silvestri, Hargraves' frequent bass fishing companion. "There's so much to fish in the 50 miles of tidal river—largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, stripers, crappies and muskies. But it does not get much publicity. Everyone remembers the Delaware of years ago when sewage and pollutants prevented migratory fish from moving upstream. But the Clean Water Act helped to turn the river around. Now you can catch bass from the tide line at Trenton through the heart of Philly and all the way to Delaware Bay."

Hargraves, too, is a strong spokesman for bass fishing on the river. He was there during the lean times and has witnessed the river recovery year by year.

"The bass fishing is better on the river today than ever, and it's only getting more impressive," Hargraves says. "It's mainly largemouths, but smallmouths are coming on strong north of Philly. The quality of the river is magnificent. There are scads and scads of bait. Actually, the bass fishing improves south of Philly probably because there is greater variety of crustaceans and baitfish."

Delaware River bass average one to 2 1/2 pounds. However, knowledgeable anglers regularly take largemouths to five pounds. Silvestri points to a certified eight-pound largemouth caught last November as the potential the river has to offer.

## How to fish tides

Both fishermen are quick to point out that success depends on the angler's knowledge of how bass react to tides. If an angler

believes he can simply fish the Delaware like an inland river or lake, that individual is in for a rude awakening.

The basics start with a tidal chart. These charts may be purchased at most map stores along the East Coast as well as larger tackle shops. They provide the daily times of high and low tides at specific sites all along the East Coast, including various points on tidal rivers.

During a 24-hour period there are two dead-water times on rivers, slack low tide and slack high tide. On the Delaware, each of these lasts approximately 40 to 60 minutes, depending on wind conditions. Throughout the rest of the day, the water is either rising or falling. High tide occurs approximately one hour later each day.

The difference in water level on parts of the Delaware may be as much as eight feet measured on a vertical structure. At high tide, water covers riverside flats and grass beds, and raises the water level in sloughs, tributary creeks, settling ponds and drainage channels. The territory flooded during high tide can be very inviting to bass, and intimidating to bass anglers. With so much cover, bass may be anywhere. Novice anglers end up wasting time fishing sites that look good but do not draw bass, or casting areas where bass schools are spread over several acres of shallow cover. At low tide, bass that foraged during high water pull back to rest.

"One key to consistently catching bass is locating the sites that concentrate fish as they move in or out of the shallows," says Hargraves. "At

the right time these funnel sites may give up numbers of bass in a matter of minutes. Other times, catching bass requires running to a few dozen mini-spots that may hold one or two fish. You have to pay your dues to become a good bass fisherman on the Delaware River."

Hargraves believes the best fishing time is two hours before dead low and the first two hours on the incoming tide. These are the periods each day that concentrate bass as they move to and from feeding grounds. Dead low tide, or ebb tide, is an extremely tough time to catch a fish. Dead high is almost as tough.

"If you don't have an opportunity to fish often, arrange a trip on a day that gives you those four magic hours in the morning," Hargraves says. "That can be dynamite fishing."

"But you have to be at the right section of the river at the correct hours. Picture a 40-mile-long rain gutter stopped at both ends and half filled with water. As you raise one end slightly, the water rushes toward the other end. One end has very little water, while the other end is on the brink of spilling over. That's exactly how the tide works on the river. There is actually a point where the water is still rising near Trenton while the tide is already outgoing at the mouth of the river."



*Delaware River tidal bass*



Instead of waiting for the tide to arrive at a particular spot, an angler should plan an outing that keeps him fishing during the best times by moving with the tide. Hargraves provides an example.

"Certain times of the year, I have found the first 30 minutes of incoming tide to be the absolute best fishing. So I check my tidal chart to see what time ebb tide is at various sites along the river. I launch at Neshaminy State Park in Bucks County and run 30 miles downriver to meet the turning of the ebb tide at a particular time and place. Then every 20 or 30 minutes I move upriver seven to 10 miles. In doing this I can fish that prime 30 minutes of rising tide all the way to Trenton."

### Tidal tactics

Fortunately for the expanding gamefish populations, the river is not lacking forage, according to Silvestri. There are several kinds of minnows and shiners as well as gizzard shad available for the bass. Around the first of September, the massive migration of young-of-the-year American shad and herring move downstream toward the ocean. This creates an early fall feast for both black bass and striped bass.

"There are various crustaceans, including blue crabs, freshwater crayfish and freshwater shrimp," says Silvestri. "The crayfish are very dark, practically black on top with a white belly. That's one reason I like fishing a jig-and-pig in the spring and fall. It has the ideal look of tidal crawdads. The jig-and-pig is particularly effective for flipping the pad beds at the mouths of feeder creeks."

During the summer, bass target abundant baitfish, so many anglers favor a crankbait at this time. But an extremely deep-diving bait is not required. One that covers the depths from four to eight feet is perfect. Silvestri prefers a Bomber 6A or 7A in a perch or firetiger pattern.

Hargraves's top pick is a four-inch swim-tail worm on a ballhead jig. His backup baits include a crankbait and spinnerbait. Topwater, tube jigs, and big worms are his least favorite tidal-water lures.

"Downsizing of lures can be critical," says Hargraves. "Most of the baits eaten by these tidal bass are on the small side, including the crayfish. The shad that bass target are rarely over two inches in length. That's one reason I prefer a four-inch worm to all other lures. When you go to a spinnerbait or crankbait, keep the overall size small. Use a 1/4-ounce spinnerbait and leave the trailer off."

"Many river anglers use a spinnerbait over and around the grass and shallow weeds—usually without much success. I throw a spinnerbait in areas most anglers fish a crankbait—riprap, rubble flats, etc."

"And slow-roll it," says Silvestri. "Extremely slowly. You can't fish a spinnerbait too slowly on the Delaware. The blades

should barely be turning. Keep it within inches of the bottom and fish it out to a depth of about 10 feet."

Sam proved this point by catching the largest bass of the day on a white spinnerbait that he slow-rolled on a riprap bank inside a harbor. He turned the reel handle slow enough to put one in a hypnotic trance, but his reaction to the strike was quick and decisive.

Throughout the day we fished riprap, breakwalls, pilings, rock piles, sunken docks and outflows at drain pipes and creek mouths. We passed by attractive-looking stands of reeds and grass beds. When I inquired about the potential of such spots, I was informed such vegetation grows on soft muck bottom in slack water.

"Tidal bass prefer areas of active current that funnel baitfish to them," Hargraves says. "I look for current on hard-bottom areas, particularly if there is riprap, sunken objects, corners or walls in association with the current."

"Some guys fish a one-mile stretch of a weedline on the Delaware all day and maybe catch one or two fish. I'd rather have 15 little spots that are no more than 10 to 30 yards long, and keep jumping from one spot to another."

The most productive lure for our day on the river was a four-inch worm. Hargraves fishes the worm several different ways, de-

pending on the cover situation, time of year and mood of the fish. However, the worm is always rigged on a 1/8-ounce ballhead jig with fiber weedguard rather than Texas-rigged with a slip sinker. This rigging provides the kind of fall that Hargraves prefers.

Generally, the worm is presented as a drop bait on walls, abutments and pilings. Cast close to a vertical structure, the worm is permitted to fall on a slack line. The bail of the spinning reel remains open to ensure a straight drop instead of a tight-line pendulum swing. Hargraves is very picky about this, and proved his point by catching most of the fish.

A hit generally occurs as the worm is in free-fall; strikes are detected by a slight line jump. If the bait reaches the bottom without a bass grabbing it, the worm is hopped once or twice before being quickly retrieved for another cast.

Another possible worm retrieve involves steadily swimming it just below the surface or at mid-depth. Also, at creek mouths and discharge pipes, Hargraves bounces the worm lightly along the bottom as the current carries it back to the boat.

In summarizing the Delaware experience, Hargraves emphasizes that the bass are programmed by the tides. "Groups of bass are at certain sites at certain times. Then as the water level changes, one group is replaced by another group as the first group moves to its next station. When you spend enough time on the river to comprehend the program, you will consistently catch fish."





Potter County in Pennsylvania's mountainous northern tier has a richly deserved reputation as a trout fisher's mecca. Streams such as the First Fork, Kettle Creek and upper Pine Creek are among our state's best loved waterways and rightly so. They dominate the southern two-thirds of Potter County, a region of abundant public land, breathtaking scenery and fine trout fishing.

However, there is another side of Potter County that many anglers miss. The northern portion of the county offers a different, but no less appealing backdrop for the visiting angler. Small farming villages dot a landscape dominated by high, wooded ridges and wide, majestic valleys. Thanks to some geologic good luck that left the region with a modest underpinning of limestone, the northern Potter streams are for the most part much richer and productive than the mountain freestone waterways to the south.

The story of the northern Potter County trout fishery begins at one of Pennsylvania's most unique points of geographic interest. Slightly south and east of the tiny village of Raymond along PA Route 49 in northeast Potter County lies the flowage divide among three great watersheds. The waters that run to the west from this point form the headwaters of the Allegheny River as it begins its journey to the Gulf of Mexico. North-bound rivulets and trickles join to form the highest reaches of the Genesee River, which flows to Lake Ontario and then to the St. Lawrence River. Waters flowing to the south become the beginnings of Pine Creek, carving a path to the West Branch of the Susquehanna and ultimately to the Chesapeake Bay. This unique parting of the waters had great historical significance both to the native peoples and to the European settlers who came to the area in the latter part of the 18th Century. Today, these waters are no less significant as quality destinations for the trout fisherman. Let's take a closer look.

### **Allegheny River headwaters**

The western two-thirds of northern Potter County are drained by the headwaters of the Allegheny River. The same river that eventually grows to dominate western Pennsylvania is a high-quality trout fishery through much of the length of its Potter County beginnings.

Trout stocking on the Potter County section of the Allegheny covers a 15-mile section of river from the crossroads village of Seven Bridges along PA Route 49 downstream to the McKean/Potter County line near Burtville along U.S. Route 6. As the river grows and gathers tributaries through this section, it offers a multitude of different water types and angling settings.

From Seven Bridges downstream for a little over two miles, the Allegheny is a small, brush-framed meadow stream, with good water quality and trout habitat. Fair numbers of wild brook

# Fishing Northern Potter County

by Robert L. Petri

and brown trout supplement the stocked fishery.

Near the small village of Colesburg along Route 49, a delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only project begins on the river and continues downstream for the next 2.7 miles. Brown and rainbow trout are stocked here, and because of the special regulations in place, good numbers of trout remain in this section of the Allegheny all through the season.

The remaining six miles of the Allegheny from the bottom of the project water downstream to Coudersport are stocked pre-season and again in May. This area holds good numbers of trout throughout the season. Here the river winds through a progression of bogs, meadows and small woodlots. There are numerous deep pools and brushy undercuts to serve as trout cover. Even though all this cover can add up to make your approach to the stream difficult in some areas, it also can mean big fish. A number of holdover browns that are measured in pounds rather than inches are taken each year from this section of the Allegheny.

After passing through the concrete flood-control channels in place in the borough of Coudersport, the river is once again free to meander through a wide valley along U.S. Route 6 west of Coudersport. Stocking continues from Coudersport all the way to the McKean County line and beyond.

### **Allegheny River tribs**

These lower Potter County reaches of the Allegheny tend to warm considerably in the summer, and are not the best part of the river for the August trout angler. However, several of the Allegheny tributaries below Coudersport do offer reasonably good summer trout fishing.

Fishing Creek enters the river at the village of Roulette about seven miles downstream from Coudersport. The main stem of Fishing Creek is stocked with brook and brown trout for about two miles from the mouth upstream to the junction of the stream's East and West branches. Fishing Creek flows through a fairly open valley and experiences some summer heating. However, it still stays considerably cooler than the river, and stocked trout from the Allegheny ascend the stream in search of more hospitable conditions.

The East and West branches of Fishing Creek are both better summer trout bets than the main stem. Both are stocked with brook and brown trout, and both remain cool enough to support trout during the heat of August. The West Branch is stocked from its mouth upstream for three miles to the vicinity of Fish Hollow. The East Branch receives fish from its mouth upstream for about 2.5 miles to an old jeep trail. Both branches are quite small and brushy, with some very deep holes for streams of their size. The entire Fishing Creek watershed is accessible via LR 4003, which leaves Route 6 near Roulette and parallels the stream and its branches.



## Oswayo Creek

To the north of the valley of the fledgling Allegheny, the watershed of Oswayo Creek charts a northwesterly course as it heads for New York state. *Pennsylvania Angler* regular contributor Charles R. Meck included the Oswayo in his listing of Pennsylvania's top 10 trout streams in the February 1995 *Angler*, and it's hard to disagree. Oswayo Creek and its tributaries are undoubtedly the best that northern Potter County has to offer the August trout angler.

PA routes 44 and 244 are the doorways to the Oswayo watershed. The stream begins along Route 244 just to the west of the village of Andrews Settlement. Just upstream from the village of Oswayo, a Fish & Boat Commission fish culture station is situated on the banks of the Oswayo to take advantage of a major series of springs that enter there. These springs change the character of the Oswayo for more than a dozen miles below their entry point, providing the stream with a continuous shot of cold, clean water that is a major factor in the excellent trout fishery.

From the vicinity of the hatchery downstream for almost six miles, the Oswayo is designated as Class A wild trout water, and no trout are stocked.

Fishing over the wild brown trout that dominate this section of the stream can be demanding but rewarding.

Remember that this portion of the Oswayo, like most northern Potter County waters, flows through privately held land. Respect the rights of the property owner, and always ask permission. You are a guest, exercising a privilege, not a right. Conduct yourself accordingly. Additionally, if you fish the wild trout section of the Oswayo, give serious consideration to returning your catch to the water. Our wild trout resource is a fragile commodity, and we are responsible for seeing it survive for future generations to enjoy.

Stocking on the Oswayo begins at the stream's junction with Clark Creek along PA Route 44 just west of the village of Coneville. Stocking continues downstream for almost four miles to the bridge on T372 at Sharon Center. Brown and rainbow trout are planted here both before and during the season, and are supplemented by a moderate number of holdover and wild fish.

These lower reaches of the Oswayo are fairly big water, averaging 60 feet or more in width. There are pools here where you could lose a compact car, so be careful where you step. Commission Area 2 Fisheries Manager Ron Lee points to these huge holes as a major factor in the Oswayo's reputation as big-fish water.

The South Branch of the Oswayo is a small, brushy waterway that enters the main stream at the village of Coneville where Routes 44 and 244 junction. The South Branch is stocked with brown and rainbow trout from its mouth 3.7 miles upstream to the bridge on T-354. Route 44 parallels the entire length of this section, and there are a number of obvious pull-offs to provide access.



The South Branch is not for the angler who becomes easily frustrated by generally tight fishing conditions. Brush and alders overhang the water in many places, making your next cast as likely to land on a branch as in the water. Of course, the flip side of this situation is that this same brush provides excellent cover for trout, making the South Branch a worthwhile August destination if your nerves are up to it.

Eleven Mile Creek is a small stream that enters the Oswayo at the village of Millport along Route 44 about three miles downstream from Coneville. It is a near clone of the South Branch in terms of size and angling conditions. Brown and brook trout are stocked over the bottom four miles of the stream. Access to the watershed is via LR 4023, which leaves Route 44 at Millport and parallels the stream through a wide, agricultural valley.

## Genesee River

With a drainage area of 136 square miles, the Genesee River and its branches comprise Pennsylvania's smallest river basin. These northbound streams rise in the farmlands of northern Potter County and begin a journey that ends along the shoreline of Lake Ontario.

Along the way, the Genesee becomes a strong and significant river to our neighbors in central New York.

Pennsylvania's portion of the main stem of the Genesee is a moderate-size waterway flowing through a valley of mixed farms and woodlots. Brown and rainbow trout are stocked here over a five-mile section from the junction of Ludington Run near the village of West Bingham downstream to the New York line. The river for the most part meanders at a leisurely pace, and displays few sections of broken water. SR 1011 parallels the upper portion of the stocked water, and PA Route 449 comes alongside near the town of Genesee to escort the river into New York.

The West and Middle branches of the Genesee are also stocked over a good portion of their lengths. Both receive plantings of brook trout opening day and again during the early season. A reasonably good population of native brookies contributes to the fishery in both streams.

The West Branch is stocked from its mouth upstream for about 4.5 miles to the village of Ellisburg. PA Route 244 runs tight along the west bank of the stream to provide access to this section.

The Middle Branch is stocked over a five-mile section from slightly below the village of Gold downstream to the mouth. PA Route 449 runs alongside the stream in this section to provide access.

The trout angler looking to sample the Genesee watershed in August will find better fishing in the branches than in the main stem. According to Commission Area 3 Fisheries Technician Dave Kristine, the open nature of the Genesee valley allows for some summer heating in the main stem. Still, trout can be found around the mouths of small tribs and near springholes in the river.



# Fishing Northern Potter County

## Tactics, techniques

August can serve up some of the most difficult stream trout angling of the season. Stream flows are at or near their low point for the year, and this can mean skittery fish and challenging fishing. Still, there are tactics and techniques that can help you catch more trout during the dog days of August. They apply uniformly to all freestone trout water, including the streams of northern Potter County.

During the warm months, trout are most comfortable and accessible during the low-light periods early and late in the day. This is especially true early in the morning when water temperatures are at their coolest point of the day. If you are not a subscribing member of the early morning risers club, the evening is your next best bet. This is particularly true on the larger waters of northern Potter County like the Oswayo and the Allegheny. The smaller northern Potter streams like Eleven Mile and the branches of the Genesee tend to stay cool enough to provide good fishing all day long on all but the most oppressive August afternoons.

Learn to fish like a predator. Stay low, and make a quiet, deliberate approach to the water. Use brush and trees along the bank to hide your silhouette. Where possible, fish the stream from the "blind" side. In pools and runs with overhanging cover or undercut banks, make your approach from the same bank where you suspect the trout

to be holding. In this way, you can approach more fish without them seeing you and add to your catch.

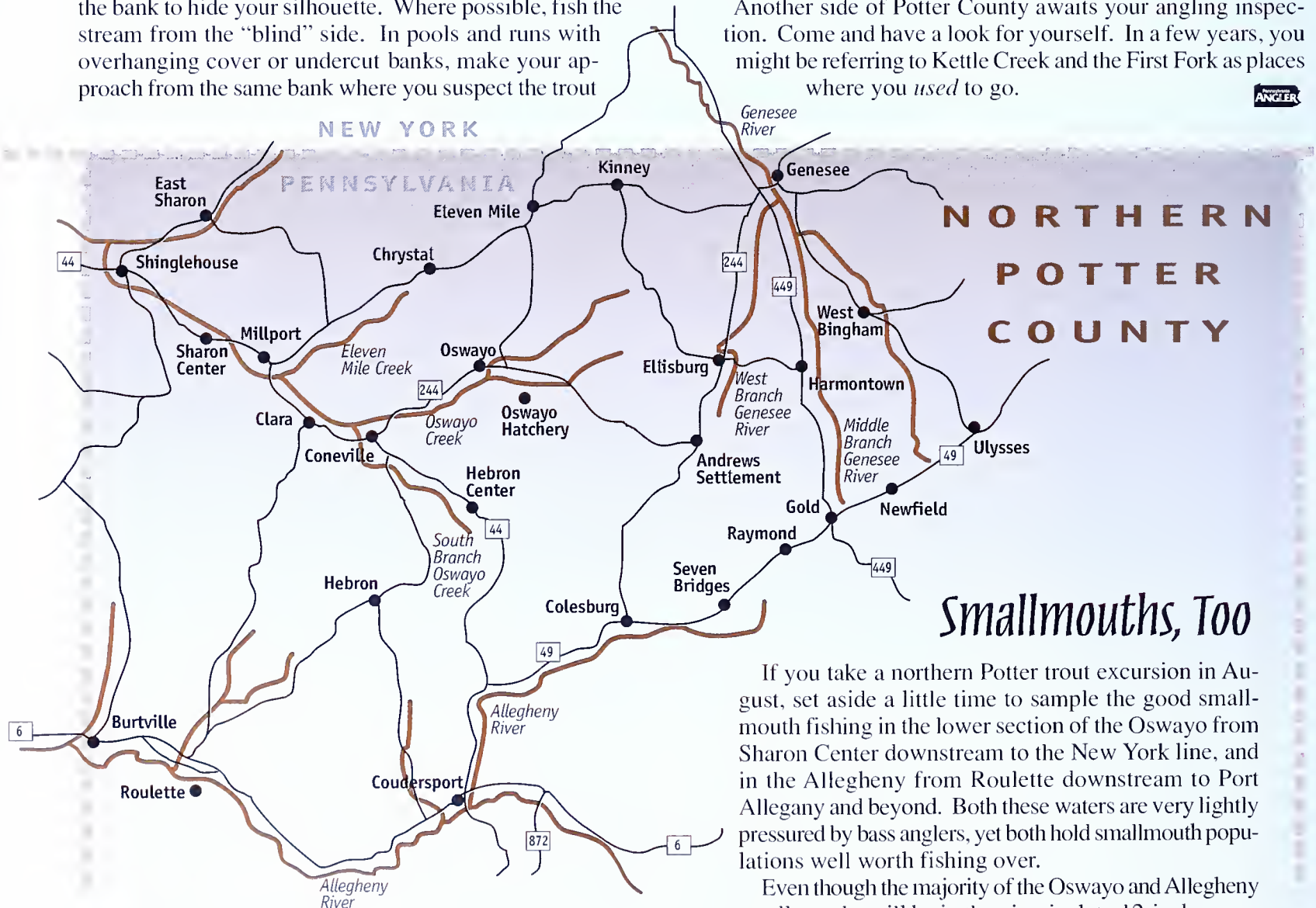
Even though summer is the toughest time of year to fish bait, you can still do well with worms and small crayfish fished on light line. Stick with mono of four-pound test or less.

Even though it's true that in summer, insects rule the earth, you can reassert your authority by using them for bait. Try drifting a grasshopper or cricket on a light-wire hook through the runs and pools. The trout are used to seeing them and will often react with some violent takes, so be prepared.

Imitations of these same insects are also the flyfisher's staple on the streams of northern Potter County in August. Deerhair beetles, crickets and ants can be murder on these fish. On larger water like the Oswayo, fish a long leader of nine feet or longer tapered to at least 5X. On the smaller confines of the branches of Fishing Creek and the South Branch of the Oswayo, you can usually get away with a 7 1/2-foot leader tapered to 4X. Hatch matchers will want to have a supply of Tricos in sizes 22 and 24 and Blue-Wing Olives in size 20 to meet the good hatches of these insects on most of the northern Potter streams.

Another side of Potter County awaits your angling inspection. Come and have a look for yourself. In a few years, you might be referring to Kettle Creek and the First Fork as places where you *used* to go.

ANGLER



## Smallmouths, Too

If you take a northern Potter trout excursion in August, set aside a little time to sample the good smallmouth fishing in the lower section of the Oswayo from Sharon Center downstream to the New York line, and in the Allegheny from Roulette downstream to Port Allegany and beyond. Both these waters are very lightly pressured by bass anglers, yet both hold smallmouth populations well worth fishing over.

Even though the majority of the Oswayo and Allegheny smallmouths will be in the nine-inch to 12-inch range, you can expect to tie into the occasional 14- to 17-inch. Like creek bass everywhere, even the small ones fight like a bulldog with an attitude.—RLP.



## After Dark

In August, night fishing can be very productive, especially on the Oswayo and the section of the Allegheny below Coudersport. The largest trout in the stream often feed only after dark in the summer. Small surface lures like the Tiny Torpedo and others kick up enough of a fuss to entice some of these cruising lunkers. Large wet flies in sizes 2, 1 and 1/0 do the same job for the fly angler.

If you plan to night fish, be sure to scout your destination during daylight hours so you have your bearings when 2 a.m. comes, the moon has gone to sleep and you are hooked to a 20-inch trout out there somewhere. The rewards of night fishing can be tremendous, but so can the costs if you miss a step. Do be careful.—RLP.

*The western two-thirds of northern Potter County are drained by the headwaters of the Allegheny River. The same river that eventually grows to dominate western Pennsylvania is a high-quality trout fishery through much of the length of its Potter County beginnings.*



*Oswayo Creek and its tributaries are undoubtedly the best that northern Potter County has to offer the August trout angler.*



# the Golden Pheasant Nymph

by  
Walt Young

Learning to fish nymphs 20 years ago was an exercise in dedication. Nowadays, there is an almost unlimited array of educational material devoted to all aspects of fly fishing. Numerous books, videos, in-depth magazine articles, along with hands-on instruction in the form of clinics and on-stream classes are all readily available to fly anglers wishing to learn or perfect their skills.

But back in the early 1970s, when I made the commitment to learn to fish nymphs, information was relatively scarce. Many of the fly-fishing books at that time offered only a chapter or less about nymph fishing. To make things worse, a lot of what was written about nymphing was hardly enlightening, often making it seem only slightly less mysterious than witchcraft. The only sure way to learn nymph fishing was to pull on your boots, get on the water and figure it out for yourself.

One of the greatest boosts to my education as a nymph fisherman, however, came not on the stream, but at the fly-tying vise. Sometime around 1976 or 1977, I concocted a nymph pattern that proved to be an uncanny producer from the first time I attached one to my leader. The fly, which I called simply the Golden Pheasant Nymph, worked so well, so often, that I probably used it 90 percent of the time over the next several seasons. My high level of confidence in that nymph allowed me to concentrate fully on honing my nymphing technique, instead of continually changing flies in search of the right pattern.

After nearly two decades, the Golden Pheasant Nymph still ranks as one of the top three or four nymph patterns in my underwater arsenal. It has taken trout all 12 months of the year from headwater brooks to larger rivers. It has also accounted for its share of big fish as well, including a 21-inch and a 23-inch brown trout that ate a Golden Pheasant Nymph for me on back-to-back casts last fall.

The Golden Pheasant Nymph derives its name from the golden pheasant tail feather fibers used for the body of the fly. The golden pheasant is a gaudy, ornamental bird, which sports an

impressively long tail, richly marked with black and tan. When wound around the hook shank, these tail fibers produce a body flecked with color closely duplicating the appearance of many important mayfly and stonefly species common to most trout streams.

Most of the Golden Pheasant Nymphs I use are tied in sizes 12 through 16 on a Mustad 9671 hook, which is a 2X long shank. Occasionally I tie a few larger ones, size 8 or 10, if there are a lot of medium-sized stoneflies in a particular stream.

The Golden Pheasant Nymph seems to do its best work when fished as close to the bottom as possible. Therefore, I prefer to weight my nymphs by wrapping the hook shank with lead wire before tying them.

The Golden Pheasant Nymph is not difficult to tie, but there are two tips that will help to yield a good-looking and durable fly. First, use enough fibers to get a nice, full body in proportion to the rest of the fly. A dozen fibers are about right for a size 12 nymph. Next, twist the fibers together to form kind of a rope as they are wound on the hook by grasping the loose ends with hackle pliers. This keeps the fibers tight and easy to manage. The completed body can be ribbed with fine wire or tying thread as further reinforcement, if desired.

The tails and wingcase of the Golden Pheasant Nymph are both fashioned from a ringneck pheasant tail feather. The tails are simply a few of the hairy, reddish-brown fibers from the outer side of the longer tail feathers. The inner side of all but the two longest center tail feathers is a delicately mottled grayish-tan. Sections cut from these fine-textured feathers make beautiful wingcases.

For the thorax, any fine-textured dubbing in brown or tan works fine. I typically use Australian opossum or dyed rabbit, as well as some of the newer synthetic blends with good results. The final component of the Golden Pheasant Nymph is a few turns of brown or dark-ginger hen hackle, the softer the better, to simulate legs.

ANGLER







## Dressing: Golden Pheasant Nymph

**Hook:** Size 12 to 16, 2X long.

**Thread:** Brown 6/0 or 8/0.

**Weight:** Fine lead wire.

**Tail:** Three or four reddish-brown fibers from a ringneck pheasant tail feather.

**Body:** Eight to 10 fibers from a golden pheasant tail feather.

**Wingcase:** Section of quill from the mottled side of a ringneck pheasant tail feather.

**Thorax:** Reddish-brown or tan dubbing.

**Legs:** Brown hen hackle.



**Step 1.** Wrap the hook shank with lead wire. Attach the tying thread and wrap several layers of thread back and forth over the lead wire to secure it in place. Wind the thread to the bend of the hook and tie in three or four ringneck pheasant tail fibers to form the tail of the nymph.



**Step 2.** Cut a bundle of eight to 12 fibers from a golden pheasant tail feather. Tie in the tip ends of the bundle directly in front of the tail. Grasp the loose ends of the fibers with hackle pliers and twist them slightly. This makes them easier to wrap and forms a neat, tight body.



**Step 3.** Wrap the bundle forward to the middle of the hook shank to form the body. Tie off the fibers and trim the butt ends closely.



**Step 4.** Cut a section from the mottled side of a ringneck pheasant tail feather for a wingcase. Position this section flat on top of the hook with the tip of the feather pointing toward the rear of the hook. Tie in the butt end immediately in front of the completed body. Apply dubbing to the tying thread and cover the rest of the exposed lead wire to form the thorax.



**Step 5.** Tie in a brown hen hackle in front of the thorax. Wrap two or three turns of hackle and tie it off. Snip off the remaining hackle tip.



**Step 6.** Pull the mottled section of ringneck pheasant tail forward to form the wingcase. Bind it down behind the hook eye and trim the excess closely. Complete the fly by forming a neat, tapered head with the tying thread and whip finish.



# SMART

## Angler's Notebook

by Carl Richardson

### NIGHTCRAWLERS

Scientists call the worm we know as "nightcrawlers" by the name *Lumbricus*, which is Latin for "worm." Nightcrawlers,

#### COLLECTION

The best time to pick nightcrawlers is at night, even better just after or during a rainstorm. The water soaks the soil, making it tough for the worms to get oxygen, so they come to the surface. In addition,

with heavy rains, burrows often flood and the nightcrawlers are forced to the surface.

IF YOU LOOK CLOSELY AT THE BOTTOM OF

THE NIGHTCRAWLER, YOU WILL SEE MANY SMALL HAIRS. THE WORM USES THESE HAIRS, CALLED **SETAE**, TO GRIP THE GROUND TO HELP THEM MOVE AROUND.

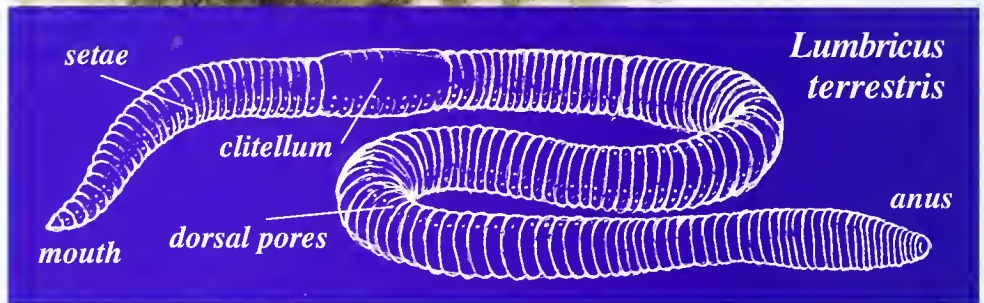
#### TIPS FOR HAPPY AND HEALTHY NIGHTCRAWLERS

- Even though nightcrawlers don't have ears, they are sensitive to sounds and vibrations. Be sure to move slowly and quietly.
- They don't have eyes, either, but they are somehow sensitive to light. Be sure that you don't shine your flashlight on the worm directly.
- Try to grab the part of the worm closest to the hole. If you grab too near the head, the rest of the body will retreat. They dig their bristles into the soil,

making it a game of tug-of-war between you and the worm.

- Dump collected nightcrawlers into a cooler or wooden box filled with dirt, potting soil or commercial worm bedding. This worm "hotel" should be kept closed and in a cool

like most worms, eat dead plants. They burrow deeply in the ground and move to the upper few inches or even to the surface of the soil to feed. Surface feeding is done during the dark of night to avoid being eaten by predators. Studies of these worms show they often pull food back into their holes. The worms then munch in the safety of their burrows.



location, but not too cold. Keep the bedding moist but not dripping wet.

- Check your new nightcrawlers an hour or so after dumping them into the worm hotel. Weed out the unhealthy or sluggish ones by picking out the ones that have not disappeared into the bedding.

- The nightcrawlers in your hotel can be fed commercial worm food. This can be found at most sporting goods stores. Any plant material should work, but don't let anything rot in the hotel.

ANGLER



# Cast and Caught



John Lucarelli, Ellwood, earned a Senior Angler Award for this Lake Erie steelhead. The fish, caught last October, was 19 7/8 inches long and weighed 13 pounds, 8 ounces.



Jason Buckland, Levittown, shows the 4-pound, 10-ounce largemouth bass he caught in the Delaware River. The fish was 19 1/2 inches long and fell for a live minnow.



Bridgeville resident Tom Brown hooked this smallmouth bass while fishing a spinner on Mahoning Creek. The fish, which was released after a quick photo, weighed 3.25 pounds and measured 19 inches in length. Nice going, Tom!



Al Adomitis used a jig to catch this walleye. The fish, caught from the Susquehanna River near Tunkhannock, measured 28 inches and weighed 8 pounds, 3 ounces.



Scott Rohrbach, Gilbert, caught and released this muskellunge while fishing on the Susquehanna River last winter. The fish measured 35 1/2 inches and weighed 11 1/4 pounds. Nice job, Scott!



Jimmy Stewart, Cheswick, hefts the 29-inch walleye that earned him a Junior Angler Award last August. The seven-year-old angler was fishing on Lake Erie when the 8-pound, 1-ounce fish attacked his lure. Great job, Jimmy!



## Governor Signs License Bill

Governor Tom Ridge has signed into law an act providing the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission much needed additional revenue through a modest fishing license fee increase. Fish and Boat Commission Executive Director Peter A. Colangelo hailed the legislation's passage as a victory for the anglers and boaters of Pennsylvania.

This legislation reflects the wishes and desires of the state's sportsmen. Although no one likes to pay higher fees for anything, Pennsylvania's sportsmen have long been willing to pay for the services they expect from the Fish and Boat Commission, Colangelo said, noting that all of the state's largest sportsmen's groups supported the increase.

The Fish and Boat Commission receives no General Fund tax money. The Commission depends primarily on the revenues raised from the sale of fishing licenses. License sales account for 90 percent of our funding base. In essence, we are supported by user fees paid by those who take advantage of the recreational opportunities Commission programs provide.

By pushing for higher license fees, our users have indicated that they recognize the quality of aquatic resources in the Commonwealth and that they want to see the programs to manage and protect those resources continue to flourish.

The Commission projects it will receive an additional \$2.5 million in revenue during the first year the new fees are in effect.

According to Colangelo, even though the additional revenue will help ensure the fiscal viability of the Fish Fund for the next few years, the Commission will continue with strong cost containment measures already in place for managing the budget.

The legislation sets the cost of an annual resident fishing license at \$16.25. The increase (from \$12) is the first for resident licenses since 1983. Senior annual license fees will be set at \$3.25, the first time these license fees have changed from the original \$2 price set in 1963. Senior lifetime licenses will sell for \$15.25. Since 1978 they have cost \$10.

Fee structures have also changed for anglers visiting from outside Pennsylvania. Non-resident annual licenses will cost \$34.25, up from \$25. The current five-day tourist license (\$20) will be abolished. In its place will be a three-day license (\$14.25) and a seven-day license (\$29.25).

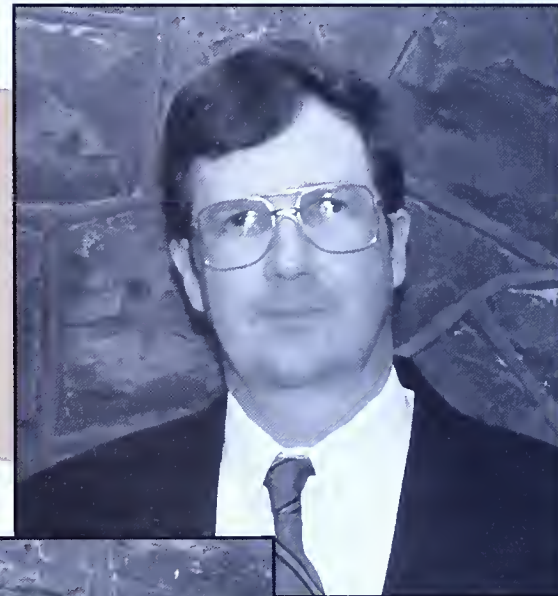
Issuing agent handling fees will be set at 75 cents, a slight raise from the current 50 cents. Replacement license fees will be \$4. Currently they are \$1.

There is no fee change for the \$5 Trout/Salmon Stamp.—*Dan Tredinnick.*

## New Commissioners

Donald K. Anderson, Meyersdale, was appointed to the Commission last May by Governor Ridge. He comes to the Commission with a long list of conservation activity and outdoor experience. He has served as a deputy for both the Fish and Boat and Game commissions, and as a member, associate member, treasurer, delegate or chairman of several sportsmen's clubs and organizations. Anderson is a graduate of Meyersdale Area High School and has earned college credits from Frostburg State College and the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. He currently works with the Bedford-Somerset Mental Health and Mental Retardation Program in Somerset.

*Commissioner  
Donald K.  
Anderson*



*Commissioner  
Enoch S. "Inky"  
Moore, Jr.*

Enoch S. "Inky" Moore, Jr., Newville, also was appointed by Governor Ridge in May. During the past 35 years, Moore has been involved in many sportsmen's groups and conservation organizations, promoting the responsible use, protection and enhancement of Pennsylvania's natural resources. He has held positions as member, vice president, president, committee chairman or legislative liaison for several organizations, and was the co-founder or founder of many of them. He graduated from Riverside High School (Buffalo, NY) and served in the U.S. Naval Reserve during World War II. Moore is currently a motor carrier transportation consultant.

Anderson and Moore will serve with eight other Commissioners, deciding policies, regulations and other matters regarding the Commission.





## New State Record Lake Trout

Timothy Strobel, New Stanton, receives a helping hand from Erie County WCO James Carter to display the new state record lake trout he caught on June 4. The 14-year-old angler was trolling a spoon on Lake Erie when the brute attacked. The huge fish broke the previous state record by two pounds, weighing 27 pounds, 10 ounces with a girth of 24 inches and a length of 37 1/2 inches. Great job, Tim!

## Lake Erie Perch Regulations

The Fish and Boat Commission has given tentative approval to a proposal that would create size and creel limits for Lake Erie yellow perch. The action came at a special Commission meeting May 30.

If adopted as final rulemaking, the regulations would create an eight-inch minimum size limit on yellow perch taken from Lake Erie. The regulations would also create a daily limit of 20 yellow perch. Currently yellow perch in Lake Erie are managed under conventional statewide panfish regulations: no closed season with no minimum size limit and a daily creel limit (combined species) of 50.

In other action, the Commission:

- Adopted tentative rulemaking that would allow the harvest of steelhead year-round in Lake Erie and its tributaries. However, harvest of steelhead and salmon will be limited to three fish per day over 15 inches. Size, season and creel limit regulations that affect the harvest of stocked trout would remain unchanged.

- Adopted tentative rulemaking affecting several regulations on the Delaware River, Delaware Estuary and the Delaware River West Branch. In conjunction with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission endorsement, a proposal to allow the harvest of two striped bass at least 28 inches in length was approved.

The current regulations impose a one-fish, 34-inch minimum size limit for Delaware River striped bass. The rulemaking also proposes a first Saturday in May opening date for walleyes along the river bordering New York. This change would harmonize the opener with New York state as well as the conventional Pennsylvania opener.

A third portion of the proposed rulemaking would create a no-kill, artificial-lures-only trout season on the eight miles of border water of the West Branch of the Delaware River. The proposed season would run from October 1 to midnight before the opening of the regular trout season in April.

- Several miscellaneous items, including the refund of two boat mooring slip fees, the transfer of .06 acres of property, and two "pass through" grants were also approved.—*Dan Tredinnick.*

## Dirt Roads and Runoff

Mud's not normal in a trout stream. Just look at a headwaters stream that hasn't been bisected or paralleled by a dirt road. After a rain, lots of water courses down the creek, but it's still clear. Leaf debris and vegetation cover bare earth and keep runoff from making mud.

In this clear stream will be healthy populations of wild trout. But let the stream get muddy consistently, and fish disappear. This isn't a high-profile pollution, like mine acid or toxics, but it is severe and insidious in its own way, says John Arway, Chief of the Commission Environmental Services Division. Sediment in a sensitive stream has many adverse effects—fish more susceptible to disease, failed spawning efforts, suffocated trout fry and depressed numbers of aquatic insects. Silt fills the spaces between rocks where young trout and other stream life hide.

Many waterways have roads along them and in much of rural Pennsylvania, these are still dirt roads. Most of these by-ways are DER state forest roads (2,540 miles) or township roads (5,300 miles), currently too underfunded to correct silted runoff problems. Legislation efforts supported by Pennsylvania Trout (PATU), the state council of Trout Unlimited, and the Commission would improve things.

According to Bud Byron, spearheading the project for PATU, although it's a statewide concern, his volunteers looked primarily at Potter County. They found over 5,000 ppm of suspended solids in the waters from eroded road and bank runoff, way above the 70 ppm that is DER's cap for discharges from sedimentation ponds.

DER is trying to upgrade its roads, but needs adequate, continual funding. "Township roads are the worst problems," says Byron. "There is virtually no training required to work on a township road." Education of road workers on proper techniques is needed, he says. The legislation, Senate Bill 220, would establish a one-week hands-on training course for township road workers. Funding is proposed to come from PennDOT's nearly \$1 billion maintenance fund.

In the bill, local governments would receive a share of \$3 million to upgrade roads, \$5,000 a mile for a maximum of two miles per year. Another \$2 million would be allocated for DER forest roads. Funding would be prioritized for roads along DER-designated High Quality and Exceptional Value coldwater fisheries. Proper road crowning and drainage, vegetated and limestone-lined ditches, road banks reseeded and use of better gravel are part of the plan.

"The Commission views these initiatives as an important need," says Arway. "Dirt roads have been overlooked for a long time and they exist in a part of the state that doesn't have a strong tax base to maintain them."—*Linda Steiner.*



## Dedication Celebrates Falling Springs Preservation

The Fish and Boat Commission, in conjunction with the Falling Springs Greenway, Inc., marked the preservation of a key stretch of Falling Springs Branch, Franklin County, with a ceremony July 7.

The event was held at the Fish and Boat Commission property along Springview Drive, Chambersburg. The highlight of the ceremony was the dedication of interpretive signs celebrating the cooperative efforts of the groups interested in protecting and preserving the famed limestone

stream. Specifically honored were: The Falling Springs Greenway, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, The Conservation Fund, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, The Flohr Family of Chambersburg, The Orvis Company and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The history of the preservation effort is a long one, culminating earlier this year with the Fish and Boat Commission taking title to five riparian lots commonly known as the Flohr Meadow. The

acquisition ensures public access to some 1,100 feet of Falling Springs. The Commission contributed roughly two-thirds of the \$310,000 purchase price for the property. The property was originally secured by the Conservation Fund. The Commission purchased three lots directly from the Fund for the sum of \$189,430. The two remaining lots were purchased by the Greenway, which in turn conveyed the property to the Commission for a consideration of \$10,670.

The Flohr Meadow property

is part of a larger 2.4-mile stream section managed under the Commission's Heritage Trout Angling Program. The program recognizes nine of Pennsylvania's more notable trout streams by designating areas where only fly fishing is permissible. The areas are open for year-round fishing, but no trout may be harvested.

—Dan Tredinnick.

## Angler's Notebook by Jeff Bryan



Another fun method for fishing lakes for large-mouths in the heat of the summer is to use topwater baits at first light. The fish are often still feeding in the early morning hours while the light is low and the water quiet. Try noisy propeller baits and buzzbaits. You can cover a lot of water with these lures, and the fishing can be very exciting.

When vertical jigging for suspended fish, it is essential to maintain the proper depth of your lure or bait. Try fishing at different depths, and when a strike occurs, before you engage the reel, mark your line where it leaves the reel with a felt-tip pen. This makes it very simple to find the proper depth the rest of the day.

Loading a spinning reel is a simple process, but there are certain steps you should take to ensure that the line does not twist radically. Lay the new spool on the floor, run the tag end through the guides and tie it to the reel. Maintain tension on the line with your other hand while reeling it in. Watch the line closely as it comes off the spool. If it starts to twist, simply flip the spool over and continue reeling. Do this as often as necessary until your reel is full.

The proper amount of line on a reel is important. Too little causes friction and results in shorter casts. Too much line can cause the line to jump off the spool and tangle. Intentionally load the reel with too much line, and then remove the excess as it falls from the spool. When the line no longer jumps off the spool, you can feel confident you have the correct amount.

One of the best crappie lures is the tube jig. In cold water, movement of the jig should be slow and teasing, but once the water warms to 55 degrees or hotter, put a "hop" into your jigging by jerking the rod tip. When casting a tube jig, add a crank of the reel handle between each "hop."

It's not easy to "practice" techniques for landing a trophy fish, but if you stay calm and remember a few key points, your chances of getting that lunker to the net increase. Loosen your drag before fishing, reducing the number of line breaks when a big fish hits. Chase the fish downstream so it cannot fully use the power of the current to fight you. Put downstream pressure on the fish, forcing the fish upstream and into the current so that it tires quickly.

Night fishing is a great way to overcome many smallmouth bass fishing problems like too many boats and wary fish. When fishing at night, look for the shallow areas next to the deep holes where you catch these fish during the day. Under cover of darkness, smallies like to cruise the shallows in search of food, and often feed in two or three feet of water.

Waters where baitfish are the main food source often produce bigger smallmouths than rivers and streams where crayfish make up the main food source. Cast into the thickest structure you can find. These are the places where the trophies live.

illustration—Ted Walke



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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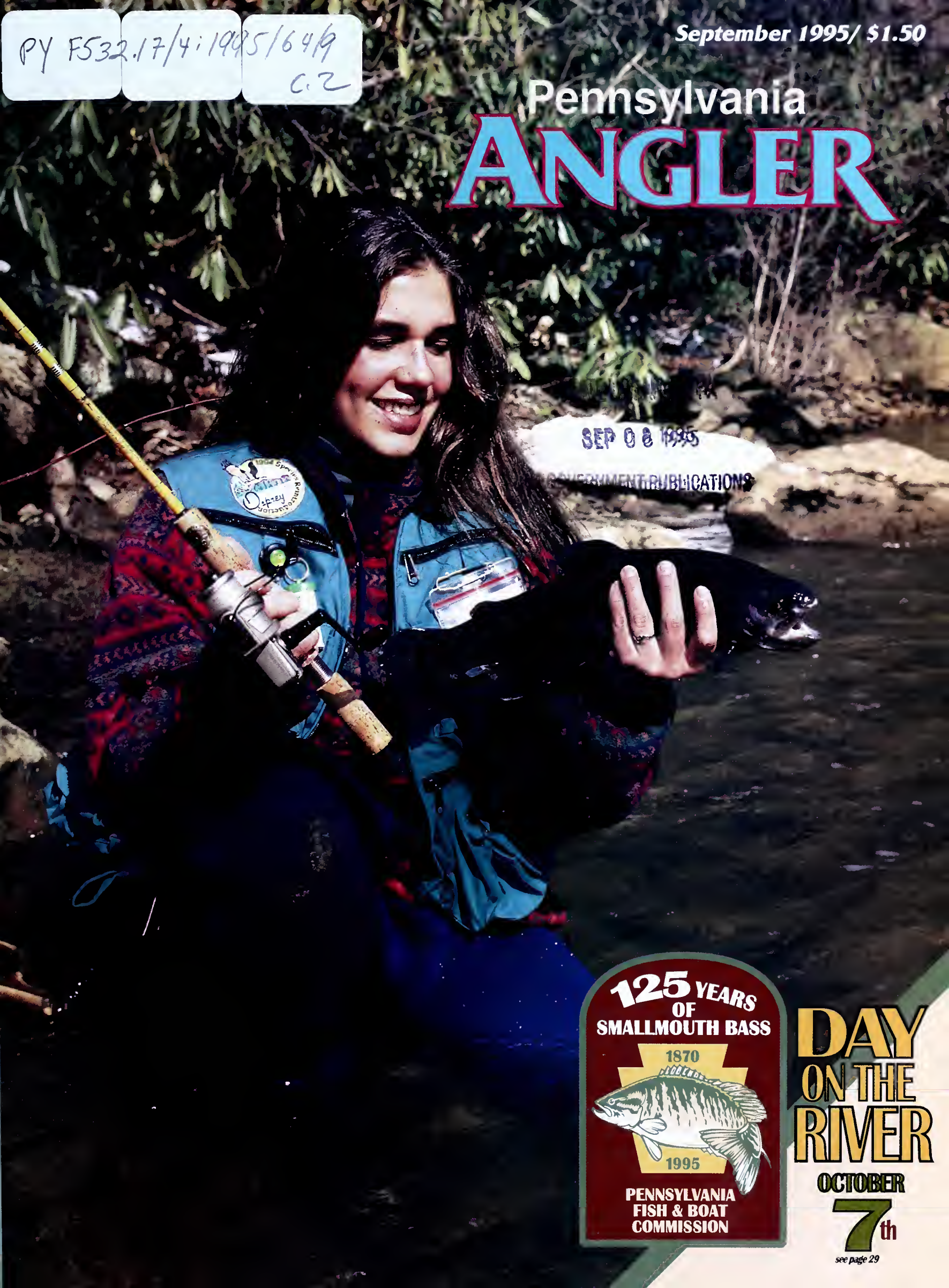




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**PENNSYLVANIA  
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**DAY  
ON THE  
RIVER**

**OCTOBER**  
**7<sup>th</sup>**  
see page 29



# Straight Talk

## Meet Deputy Executive Director/ Chief Counsel Dennis T. Guise

At the January Commission meeting, I requested and was given the authority to establish a Deputy Executive Director position in lieu of the current Executive Assistant position previously held by Larry Hoffman. Larry retired from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission on August 11, 1995. He had an outstanding career with the Commission and we all are going to miss his untiring, dedicated service.

During the most recent Commission meeting, July 22-24, I proposed the selection of Dennis T. Guise as my Deputy Executive Director/Chief Counsel. I was pleased to see our 10 Commissioners vote unanimously in favor of selecting Mr. Guise. To relieve Dennis of his routine legal duties and responsibilities, we will establish an Assistant Counsel position.

I thought the anglers and boaters of Pennsylvania would be interested in learning Dennis' background and my reasons for selecting him for this very important position.

Dennis T. Guise was born in Hagerstown, Maryland on January 10, 1947. He graduated from Gettysburg Area High School in 1965 and received an undergraduate degree in political science from Gettysburg College and graduated as salutatorian of his class. He received a law degree from the University of Pennsylvania Law School in 1972. He served in the Air Force as an officer from January 1973 until June 1978. Since leaving active duty, Dennis has served in the Air Force Reserve. He presently is a Colonel and serves as the staff judge advocate, Headquarters, Pennsylvania Air National Guard. Mr. Guise has received numerous military decorations, including the Meritorious Service Medal and the Air Force Commendation Medal.

Mr. Guise was employed as our Chief Counsel on July 3, 1978, on a part-time basis, and since June 30, 1989, he has been devoted to the Commission on a full-time basis as the Director of the Office of Chief Counsel and Environmental Services.

My rationale for selecting Dennis Guise as my Deputy Executive Director:

- He has the confidence, trust and respect of me, the Commissioners, Bureau Directors and staff.

- For some time, it has been recognized that Dennis has been operating as more than Chief Counsel. He has, in fact, been used by Bureau Directors for advice and counsel in most significant programmatic issues. He has been for all intents and purposes a chief of staff.

- He has a keen understanding and is dedicated to the Commission's mission and goals.

- He was a finalist in the Commission's search for an Executive Director.

- He has a keen understanding of and sense of dedication to the environment. As Chief of the Environmental Services Division, he has been a strong advocate of the protection and management of the Commonwealth's aquatic resources.

- He has the ability to handle and direct multiple complex projects effectively and decisively and always offers good solutions to difficult problems in a timely manner.

- He is a remarkable attorney with great administrative skills.

- He is an excellent communicator both orally and in writing. He has demonstrated that he's an outstanding spokesperson for the agency, both internally and externally.

- He is an enthusiastic person with a positive "can-do" attitude.

- He is sensitive to people's needs.

- He strives for a win/win situation when at all possible.

- He has a large capacity to deal with many complex issues at the same time and does so constructively, objectively and honestly.

- He has a keen understanding of how our agency fits into the state government operation and has an excellent relationship with other state agencies.

Dennis received a Management Performance Award from Governor Dick Thornburgh for the 1984-1985 Fiscal Year.

He is married to the former Betty Hostetter and they have two sons, Andrew and Brendan.

Dennis T. Guise is an individual with outstanding leadership qualities, abilities and talents. He is someone who has earned my trust and confidence. I know with him as the Deputy Executive Director we will be successful in making the best agency devoted to fishing and boating even better.



**Peter A. Colangelo**

*Executive Director*

*Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*



**Dennis T. Guise**

*Deputy Executive Director/Chief Counsel*

*Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*

*Peter A. Colangelo*



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# Pennsylvania ANGLER

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*This issue's cover, photographed by Joe Workosky, shows Pennsylvania angler Jennifer Workosky with a nice rainbow trout she caught on Laurel Hill Creek, Somerset County.*

## Blue Marsh and other Southeast Crappie Holes Comin' On Strong

Blue Marsh Lake, Berks County, was impounded in 1979. The crappie fishing there has certainly been up and down over the years because of competition between young crappies and the alewife population. Nevertheless, recent findings by Commission biologists are enough to raise any angler's eyebrows.

"By 1982, Blue Marsh crappie populations were overly abundant and small," says Mike Kaufmann, Commission Area 6 Fisheries Manager. "In 1983-6, minor fish kills occurred because of the abundance of crappies."

Kaufmann says there was one good year or so, 1983, when you could catch fish that were 10 to 11 inches, maybe a 12-incher here and there. From 1983 until 1986 reproduction was poor. In 1986 reproduction was good, in 1987 it was fair, in 1988 and 1990 it was poor, and in 1992 it was fair again. Reproduction in 1986 produced half-decent crappie fishing in 1989, but then it fizzled again.

"In 1992 we had some fair reproduction again, and we thought that by 1994 or 1995 we'd see the results, and we did," Kaufmann says. "In 1994, we sampled to see if the abundance of young fish would be a predicting key to abundant adults a few years later. In Blue Marsh Lake's case, strong reproduction does produce improved fishing a few years later."

Kaufmann says that the crappie fishing in Blue Marsh in 1994 and so far this year has been good. In his personal experience, he's had 30 fish in an outing, and in 1994 one out of every 10 was about 12 to 14 inches long. In 1995 one in three fish has been nine to 11 inches long.

"Based on the catch rates I tracked and on the numbers of young fish we sampled in 1994, we learned that 1993 reproduction was good, too. That puts anglers into good crappie fishing in Blue Marsh through 1997 and probably 1998," Kaufmann says.

This fall and next season, in addition to Blue Marsh Lake, other good bets in southeast Pennsylvania for solid crappie action are: Lake Nockamixon, Struble Lake if the fish grew this past summer, and Lake Ontelaunee. In addition, Speedwell Forge Lake crappies came on strong in Kaufmann's recent surveys.—Art Michaels, *Chief, Magazines and Publications.*







# Long Arm Dam Walleyes

by  
Seth Cassell

Located in the shadows of popular Lake Marburg, Long Arm Dam contains a virtually untapped walleye fishery that only a handful of dedicated anglers ever bothers fishing. If you are willing to be patient and fish during unconventional times, you have the opportunity to cash in on this "sleeper" impoundment's wealth of walleyes and possibly latch on to fish up to 28 inches.

Long Arm Dam is a 185-acre impoundment that serves as the water supply for the borough of Hanover. Officially it is named the Lawrence B. Sheppard Reservoir. However, it was dubbed by locals "Long Arm Dam" after "Long Arm Creek," the waterway that was impounded.

"Long Arm Dam is the best walleye fishery in the southcentral region," says Larry Jackson, Commission Area 7 Fisheries Manager. "It is a very consistent lake with a high density of healthy walleyes."

Recent surveys indicate an average size range of 17 to 22 inches. However, anglers have been known to pull out walleyes as large as 28 inches.

According to Jackson, the walleye population is self-sustaining and relies primarily on the alewife forage base. Although alewife are the main baitfish in Long Arm Dam, the walleyes also prey on young panfish, crappies and largemouth bass.

## Lures, tactics

Long Arm Dam's walleyes do not surrender easily. Because it is restricted to electric motors and daytime fishing, catching walleyes here is challenging.

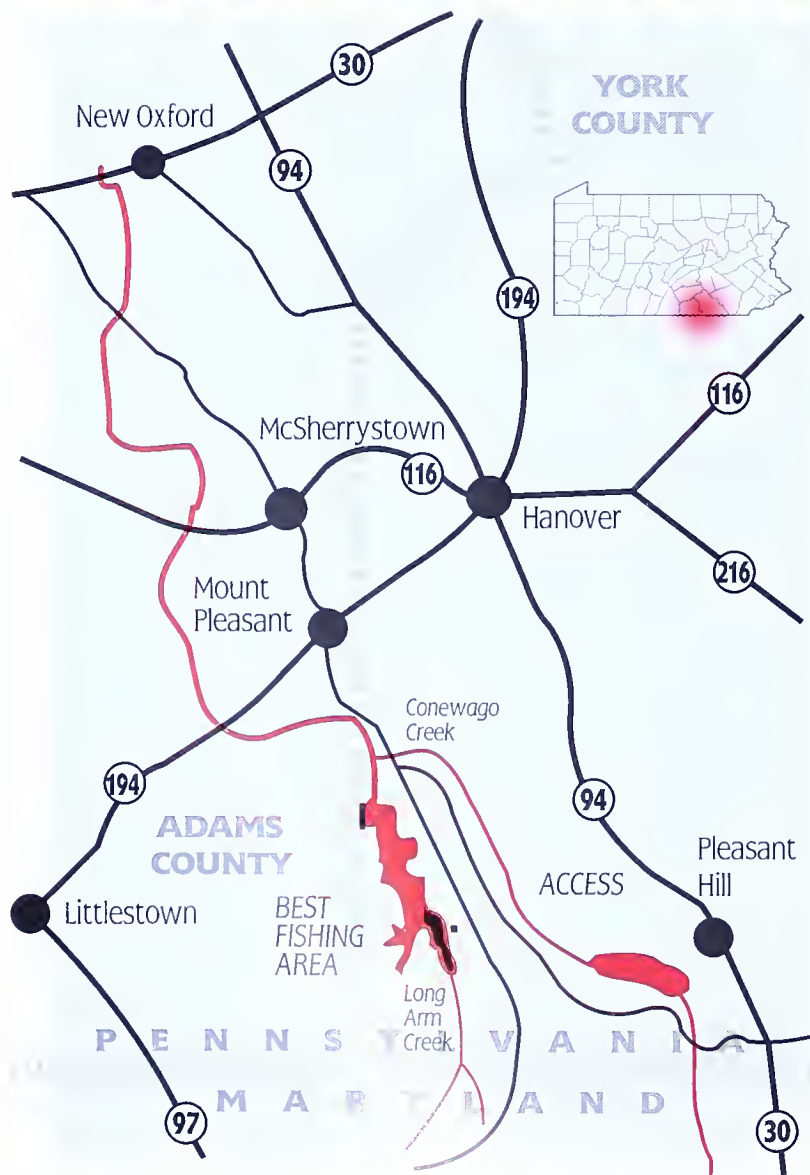
Walleyes are light-sensitive fish, and they prefer areas of subdued light. They are seldom found making foraging runs in the shallow water during the daylight hours. Instead, they are in the depths where they can escape intruding light.

Steve Pensinger, a Chambersburg resident, is one of the few anglers who knows how to catch Long Arm Dam walleyes consistently.

"Trolling is by far the best method of catching walleyes in late summer at Long Arm Dam," he says. "This is mainly because the walleyes are suspended in the depths, especially this time of year."

Electronic fishfinders are an immense help when fishing Long Arm Dam. The greatest advantage is that they allow you to see the depth where the walleyes are holding so you know where to work your lure. Usually, during late summer, the walleyes hold just above the thermocline, which, according to Spensinger, is usually around 15 feet.

"I usually troll along the shorelines," says Spensinger. "It is best to troll with the wind, because the walleyes face the opposite direction and they can see the lure coming."





Once you find the walleyes on the fishfinder, be persistent with them. It is best to cover one good holding spot thoroughly than to cover a wide area hastily, says Spensinger. "Once I locate walleyes on the finder, I keep covering that area until they hit."

Spensinger reports that the best lure for Long Arm Dam is a live-bait walleye spinner with a size 4 Indiana blade. He prefers making his own spinners and adds multicolored beads to the spinner shanks. This home-made rendition, he says, closely resembles an Erie Dearie, which is a weight-forward spinner that is specifically designed to catch suspended walleyes.

Pensinger found that silver, red and chartreuse blades work best. However, he relies heavily on a color-selector when choosing appropriate colors. A color-selector is a device with a probe cable that aids anglers in color choice. "I rely heavily on mine. It allows me to choose, under current water and light conditions, the color that the walleyes will be able to see best. The color doesn't necessarily represent the color of baitfish the walleyes are feeding on. Instead, it is a color that walleyes can readily see."

To add the final touch to his walleye spinner, Pensinger threads a nightcrawler onto the single hook, which is a very popular walleye rig. He says, "Usually, it is best to add the nightcrawler. But I have found that it is best to experiment with or without it. Some days, spinners are more productive without the nightcrawler attached."

When trolling with spinners, Pensinger likes to use a spinning outfit with a medium- to heavy-action rod that is five to six feet long. Also, he strictly uses eight-pound-test line.

Other lures that can be effective when trolling are diving crankbaits. Pensinger has some success using these lures, but he does not use them often.

He says, "These can be hot lures, and I once witnessed an angler heft a 28 +-incher out of Long Arm Dam using a diving crankbait. The problem with using it is you have to run the boat fast to keep the crankbait at the proper depth. This quickly runs down your trolling battery."

For many years Pensinger has been trying to figure out the best time of day to catch summer walleyes at Long Arm Dam. But after much contemplation and hundreds of hours of fishing, he has come to the conclusion that there is no best time.

"Long Arm Dam is a very peculiar lake," he says. The fish don't really seem to have a preferred feeding time in summer. They can go on a feeding binge just about any time of day. It just seems like a 'dinner bell' rings at an arbitrary time. Because of this, Long Arm Dam is a very tough lake to fish. But my theory is that if you have the patience to fish all day, at some point you'll catch fish."

### Fall lures, tactics

"Fall can be an excellent time to fish Long Arm Dam," Pensinger says. Instead of trolling, Pensinger says that jigging on the bottom is the best tactic. "I like to use 1/4-ounce jigheads with orange

and chartreuse bodies. However, I still rely heavily on my color indicator when choosing the proper jig color."

Pensinger recommends tipping jigs with shiners. "You'll catch more fish in the fall if you add a shiner. Some anglers at the lake add nightcrawlers, but I've had the most success with shiners."

During autumn it is best to work your jigs along the points, he says. "I found that walleyes like to hang around these points,

just off the bottom. Most of the walleyes that I catch in the fall are close to the points."

It is best to work your jig steadily when probing for walleyes, according to Spensinger. However, when he knows that he is in a good walleye area, he works the jigs very subtly. He says, "When I know my lure is literally at a walleye's nose, I found it is best to just let the jig sit and not work it much."

Spensinger suggests using a medium- to heavy-

action spinning rod with a fast tip when jigging in the fall. He says, "The fast tip allows me to feel the fish better."

As the weather becomes colder and ice begins to form along the lake edges, don't overlook fishing Long Arm Dam. Spensinger has had great success fishing during this time. He reports, "All I do is fish the edges of the ice line. Walleyes line up along these areas because the ice blocks sunlight."

The first two hours of daylight are the best time to fish Long Arm Dam in the fall, according to Spensinger. He has found that walleyes congregate at the points in the morning, but after mid-morning they clear out and become "extremely difficult to catch."

### Hotspots

"The southern end of the impoundment is definitely best," Pensinger claims. "The east branch of Long Arm Dam offers the absolute best walleye fishing. This area is very steep off the banks, and walleyes congregate in these areas. More specifically, the east shoreline of the east branch is particularly good."

Another area that offers fast walleye action is on the east branch in the cove that is directly across from the boat-launch area. Spensinger notes, "This cove is great, and I take an awful lot of walleyes out of here."

Long Arm Dam can be extremely tough to fish on a calm, sunny day, Spensinger says. When calm weather occurs, more sunlight is allowed to reach the depths, turning off these light-sensitive fish. If it is sunny, it is best to have a lot of wind. The choppy water helps block sunlight, thus keeping infringing sunlight from reaching the depths.

Pensinger says that the ideal weather is an overcast day.

### Access

Long Arm Dam can be reached from Route 94. From Hanover, follow Route 94 five miles. Then travel west on Fairview Road to Beck Mill Road. Finally, get on Grand Valley Road, which leads to the boat launch.





With a loud pop the excited fish smacked the leggy fly that had been inching its way around a partially submerged tree limb. The determined creature used its slab-shaped body to strain against the leader as it made a head-shaking run for deep water. After several more lunges and darting direction changes, the rod guided the tired bruiser to the water's edge. It was quickly unhooked and released.

That hard-fighting fish was not a Lake Erie walleye or a limestone stream brown trout. It was just an eight-inch bluegill caught in a farm pond.

Many anglers associate farm ponds with night-crawlers and happy childhood summers. But fishermen don't realize that there is no better training ground for fly fishing than a farm pond.

There is no need to travel thousands of miles and spend lots of money on planes, guides, lodging and equipment, or to do battle with the elements, insects, other anglers or reluctant eaters. Farm ponds by nature are small and uncomplicated, and they are filled with willing fighters. Most of the time you don't have to share your spot with the rest of humanity.

Structure is the key to fishing farm ponds. Ponds are rarely more than a few acres. So structure and other fishy-looking spots can be picked out quickly so that you can decide easily how to fish them. What to look for above and in ponds includes aquatic vegetation, rocks along the shore, docks, sandy beaches, drain pipes and trees—both in and out of the water.

Structure is important because it furnishes a refuge for prey such as minnows and insects. Larger predator fish use structure as an ambush spot when feeding and shelter when they are not.

Drain pipes are the first form of structure to look for when scouting a farm pond. Water outlets attract fish because food such as insect larvae and small minnows are drawn there by the current. Fish can hang outside the current and grab a favorite morsel moving past them, much like a trout in a stream. Drain pipes are usually in the deepest part of the pond, which also makes them good places to find bass during the middle of the day when the temperature and sun are high.

Fishing near a drain pipe that pours into or out of a pond can be productive, too. The sound of water spilling and the surface disturbance it makes also help mask your movements from fish. These moving water areas can be good places to fish sub-surface flies such as streamers and nymphs, which look like the minnows and insects that are trapped and washed out.

Other structure is fallen or overhanging trees. Fish are attracted to overhanging trees and vegetation. Insects, mice and even baby birds often fall or are blown into the pond from them. Floating imitations of these creatures work well. In fact, they work well all along the pond's edge where vegetation meets

# FARM PONDS

## *Training Grounds for Fly Fishing*

*by Sarah Gardner*

water. Few bluegills can resist the flailing rubber legs of a sponge-body ant.

Submerged trees and branches hold predatory fish, which suspend among the underwater branches waiting for unsuspecting food to swim by. Baitfish-imitating streamers work well here when cast close or into the branches. Position yourself so that when you strip the line in, the fly swims parallel to the structure.

I also like to fish poppers and other noise-making flies around this type of cover. The surface commotion draws fish out of their hiding places. Be careful because this kind of cover holds not only a lot of fish, but a lot of your flies.

Aquatic vegetation such as cattails and lily pads attracts predator fish for the same reason that fallen branches do, so use the same flies and fish them the same way. Also try frog and crayfish imitations in these spots. Casting a deer hair frog into the openings of lily pads and twitching it occasionally drives bass crazy.

Shallow areas like a sandy beach are good places to find fish, but usually at more specific times of the day and season. Bluegills, that is, sunfish, bluegills and pumpkinseeds, can be found in the shallows during the day. This is where they do much of their foraging for food. More importantly, this is where they spawn. Bluegills spawn several times from late April through September. Their nests are easy to see in the shallow water. Nests are round, scooped-out areas about the size and depth of an upside-down garbage can lid. The nests are usually grouped together in what can be called a bed. Beds look like a huge piece of Swiss cheese. When bluegills are in the spawn mode, they are super aggressive and will attack almost any fly that is presented to them.

Bass don't spend nearly as much time in shallow water. They are best fished for there early or late in the day. Bass drive schools of baitfish in this skinny water and then move back out to deep water to wait for another attack. Early spring and late fall are times when you find bass in shallow water. When water temperatures are in the low 40s or below, heavily weighted streamers can be the only way to move lethargic bass. Strip slowly and allow the fly to bounce along the bottom.

There is another type of structure that fly fishermen should pay attention to. And it does not hold fish—only your flies. Most lakes and reservoirs have wooded edges or a lot of overgrown vegetation in or around them, often making fishing with a fly rod difficult. A very nice feature of most farm ponds is that the area around them is mowed or cultivated so there is less plant life to hamper back casts. Well-manicured farm ponds also allow easier access to their banks and fish action. You can make shorter and more accurate casts. Landing and releasing fish is also much easier when they don't have to be hoisted over a hedgerow of growth.





*Husky farm pond  
bluegills hit an  
assortment of flies.*

One way to keep your line and fly out of plants and snags is to keep your casting arm between you and the pond. This way the fly line spends more time traveling over the water and less time over land, where the snags are. Also, it is easier to cast parallel to the bank, when using this system.

Farm ponds provide two very popular fish species for fly fishermen to target: bluegills and bass. They both eat flies readily, fight hard and are plentiful. Neither requires a lot of complex tackle. At most, you need only two different rod weights—a 5-weight or 6-weight for bluegills and an 8-weight for bass. To get started you can easily get away with one or the other size, or compromise with a 7-weight.

Many flies that they eat overlap. Neither type of fish is leader-shy, so you don't need to use super-fine tippets or long leaders. You will appreciate shorter, higher pound-test leaders when you start catching trees and throwing heavy flies. Leaders such as these hold up to the tugging and whipping needed to free flies from trees. Hefty leaders do not collapse easily or get tangled with a heavy fly. This means fewer wind knots and more accurate casts.

## Bluegills

Bluegills rarely weigh over a pound, but their personality and body shape make them a fun fight. They have a wide profile that catches water like a kite catches the wind. When bluegills decide to take a fly, they whack it hard. But because of their small stature, bluegills need time to size up their prey and make sure it won't eat them. It is important, then, to strip flies slowly and use subtle colors that don't spook them.

Productive colors are black, brown and olive with a pinch of yellow. These colors are low key and they are the same colors as the 'gill's prey. A bluegill's mouth is smaller than its appetite, so the best hook sizes to use are between twelve and six.

A 5-weight or 6-weight rod matched with a floating fly line

is all you need if you are going to concentrate on catching 'gills. These rods are light enough to land a small fly gently on the water's surface. Yet, they still have enough power to be able to throw larger, more wind-resistant flies like hairbugs and poppers.

The best flies for bluegills are imitations of insects in different life stages. 'Gills go crazy for flies with legs. Leggy flies can be twitched by gently shaking your rod tip. To a fish this looks like a struggling insect. Or they can be made to look like they are swimming, by stripping the fly in with slow, short strokes.

## Bass

Like bluegills, bass hit aggressively. Best of all, bass get big. Four- and five-pounders are often found in ponds. A bass over eight pounds is possible in a healthy pond. Large fish require larger equipment and flies. If you want to concentrate on catching bass, get an 8-weight rod and line. You need this heftier outfit to cast large wind-resistant flies like hairbugs and big streamers. An 8-weight rod is also helpful when setting the hook on a bass. As with bluegills, all of your bass fishing can be done with a floating fly line.

You will also want a larger reel to accommodate the fly line and to balance the weight of the rod. An exposed rim reel with a click drag works great for bass.

Bass, like bluegills, love lures with legs. Just use larger versions of the flies described for 'gills. Bass often stop feeding until the sun and thermostat have gone down. Streamers are a must in your bass fly box. These wet flies imitate baitfish, which form a large part of a largemouth's diet. Streamers when stripped slowly can be made to imitate minnows.

After fishing a pond for a season or two, it's rewarding to know that you can find and catch fish there. What you learn there can be applied to all other forms of fly fishing.





# SMART

## Angler's Notebook

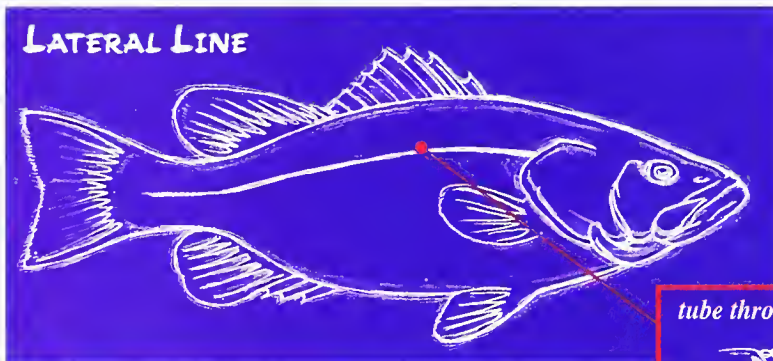
by Carl Richardson

### FISH SENSES: Hearing and Sound

Fish count on two different organs working together to locate and sense sounds. Those organs are called the **lateral line** and the **inner ear**.

#### LATERAL LINE

On both sides of nearly all fish is a line of pores called the lateral line. These pores are the openings of tiny tubes that go through the scales into the body and end near a large nerve called the lateral line. At the end of each tube are special cells with tiny hairs. Sound waves or vibrations that enter these tubes make the little hairs dance. As they dance, they stimulate the lateral line nerve. That nerve connects to the hearing portion of the fish's brain. Because some tubes point in different directions than others, the fish can accurately locate where a vibration is coming from. This is also how schools of fish can move together.



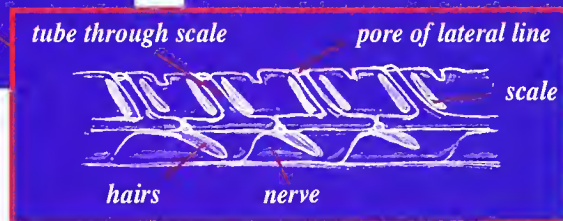
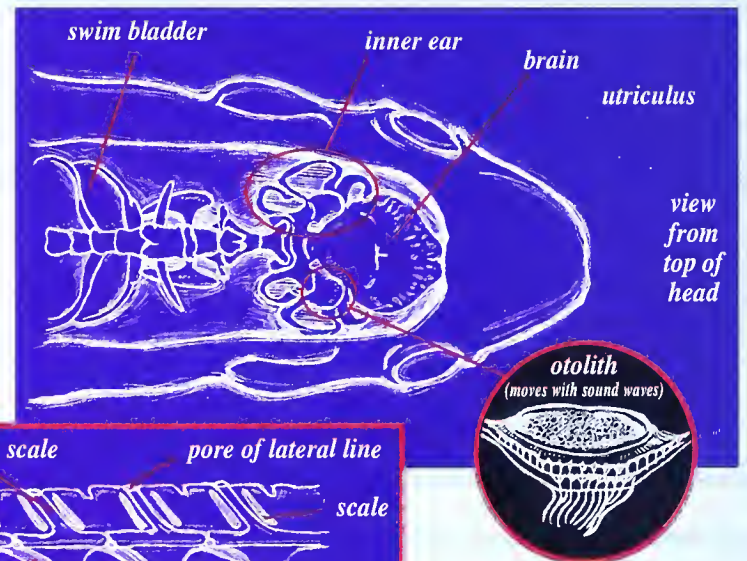
#### PUTTING IT TOGETHER

When a baitfish, crayfish or even a lure moves through the water, it gives off vibrations. These vibrations travel through the water in waves. Some vibrations, depending on the sound and distance from the fish, can be heard by the fish. Some vibrations can only be felt.

For example, vibrations coming from a lure, maybe as much as 80 feet away, are felt by the lateral line. This is like when your insides rattle after a loud clap of thunder or fireworks ex-

#### INNER EAR

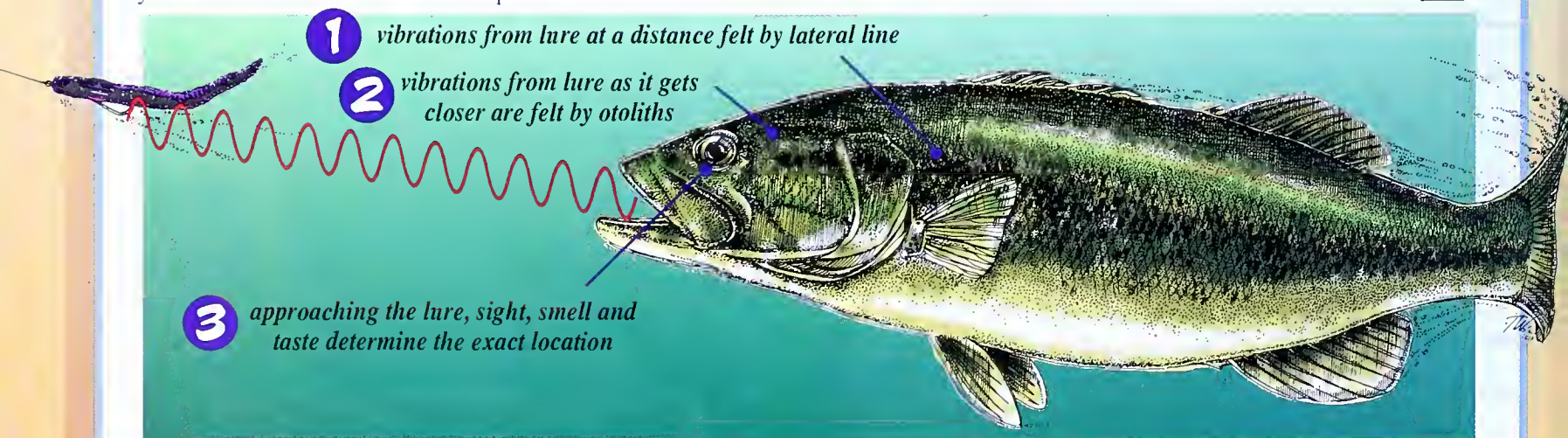
Like humans, fish have an inner ear on both side of the brain. This inner ear aids in balance and interpreting sound. The part of the inner ear involved in sound is called the ear bone, or otolith. The otolith is a solid piece of bone and is surrounded by a sac filled with fluid and lined with tiny hairs. Sound waves travel right through a fish's body, as if it were not there, and reach the very dense otoliths making them move. This movement stimulates the tiny hairs and the attached nerves. The fish's brain then receives and interprets the message.



plode. You feel the vibration instead of hearing it.

As the lure gets closer, the sound of the lure's rattles is picked up by the otoliths and interpreted by the brain. The otolith, in combination with the lateral line, helps the fish determine the exact location of the lure. As the fish approaches the lure, it counts on other senses (sight, smell and taste) to determine if it is food.

ANGLER





When Fish and Boat Commission employees are spotted out in the field, the questions from the public are usually predictable. Among the most common are: "Where are you stocking the fish?" and "How can I get a job like that?" Phones at our facilities ring constantly with people wondering how to get jobs with our agency. Our field employees are involved with "Career Days" at many local schools and colleges. So just how do you get a job with the Fish and Boat Commission? First, let's take a close look at the agency to see what the Fish and Boat Commission really does and what types of jobs are available.

### Agency introduction

In 1866, the legislature created what is known today as the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC). The Fish and Boat Commission is the only separate, independent state agency in the United States dedicated to the management of its fishing and boating resources. The original legislation provided for one commissioner, appointed by the Governor.

*E&I volunteer Godfrey Studenmund helps a young angler.*



# Career and Volunteer Opportunities in the Fish and Boat Commission

by Cheryl Hornung

Today, the agency policies are established through a Commission composed of 10 members.

The agency's original mission was to monitor shad migrations in the state's rivers. Today, the Fish and Boat Commission's mission is "to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources." "Aquatic resources" are the water environments of the state that support or have the potential to support natural, free-living aquatic organisms. This includes fish, fish bait, bait fish, amphibians, reptiles, plants, animals and other organisms that grow, live in or on the water. The Commission is recognized as a leading aquatic resource agency in the nation.

This mission is carried out through four agency-wide goals:

- To protect, conserve and enhance aquatic resources.
- To provide for the protection of aquatic resource users.
- To address the expectations of anglers and boaters.
- To advocate the wise and safe use of aquatic resources.

The Commonwealth has a variety of water resources that provide many fishing and boating opportunities. These resources include about 40,000 miles of rivers and streams, over 2,000 natural lakes and impoundments, the tidal waters of the Delaware River, and Lake Erie. Also

present are another 300,000 acres of wetlands that we are charged to protect.

To meet its mission, the Commission is organized into one Executive Office and several bureaus that report to an executive director. The director and staff are housed in the Executive Office and are involved in long-term planning and policy guidance on general agency operations. The Office of Chief Counsel and Environmental Services provides legal and regulatory support to carry out our mission.

The Administrative Services staff provides unseen support for the day-to-day operations of licensing and personnel management. Included are managing budgets, obtaining funding and procurement of supplies and services.

Boating employees are responsible for the management of recreational boating, boating laws, the registration of boats, navigation aids and education programs for boat operators. It also coordinates the Commission's information systems.



*Volunteers help stock fish.*





*Fish culturists (right) demonstrate their work during a recent Commission "Day at a Hatchery," at the Linesville Fish Culture Station. WCO Terry Hannold (below) talks to a group of youngsters at the Commission's exhibit at an outdoor show. A specially rigged pontoon boat (bottom right) lets fish culturists and biologists collect fish.*



*Career and Volunteer Opportunities in the Fish and Boat Commission*





Education and information staff are responsible for the distribution of information about Commission activities and programs. They are also responsible for training Pennsylvania residents about the aquatic resources of the state and the opportunities provided by them.

In the Bureau of Fisheries, 14 fish culture stations produce more than 10 million coldwater fish and more than 101 million warmwater/coolwater fish each year. These employees are charged with the management of fish, reptiles and amphibians, and endangered species.

Approximately 93 waterways conservation officers work in six law enforcement regions. Their job is to protect the resource and resource users.

The design, construction and maintenance of Commission facilities are the responsibility of those involved in property and facilities management. These facilities include access areas, fish culture facilities and office complexes. These employees are also involved in the acquisition and management of property and aquatic habitat improvement.

The efforts of the Fish and Boat Commission pay big dividends. According to a 1991 survey, 1.4 million anglers 16 years and older fished 23 million days, and more than two million boaters took some 20 million trips.

The Commission receives no general fund money from the state budget. The Fish and Boat Commission operates on funds from the sale of fishing licenses and permits, boat registration fees, federal reimbursement through the Sport Fish Restoration Fund, state and federal marine fuels tax, fines, fees and pollution restitutions. The Dingell-Johnson Act placed an excise tax on fishing tackle and boating accessories. This money goes into the Sport Fish Restoration Fund.

The Commission has about 445 permanent employees, 150 seasonal employees and many volunteers. As with many natural resource agencies, the Commission experiences a very low turnover rate.

## **Permanent positions, Civil Service**

Approximately 60 percent of our permanent positions are covered by civil service and are generally professional or technical. Civil service appointments are based on the results of a civil service test and the Veteran's Preference Act. Many applicants compete for a few positions. When the civil service test dates are an-

nounced, complete a civil service application and mail it directly to the Civil Service Commission to be scheduled for a test. Do not send an application to the Civil Service Commission until the test is announced or your application will be returned.

## **Civil Service Commission**

### **Harrisburg Office**

320 Market Street  
P.O. Box 569  
Harrisburg, PA 17108-0569  
(717) 787-7811

### **Pittsburgh Office**

Room 411  
State Office Bldg  
300 Liberty Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-1210  
(412) 565-7666

### **Philadelphia Office**

Room 708  
State Office Bldg  
1400 Spring Garden St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19130-4088  
(215) 238-6277

Listed below are some job descriptions and requirements for Commission civil service jobs.

## **Fish Culturist I**

In raising and stocking over 30 million fish each year, the Fish and Boat Commission employs over 100 fish culturists. They work at 14 fish culture stations scattered across the state. Culturists are involved in the care and propagation of fish and in the operation and maintenance of a fish culture station.

Fish Culturist I involves the performance of training-level limited technical and semi-skilled manual work. Duties range from helping in netting, sorting and grading fish to performing construction and maintenance tasks on buildings, grounds and equipment.

To apply for this position, applicants must have graduated from high school or had equivalent certification or formal training. Applicants must possess a valid PA driver's license. Employees entering this classification must obtain a Commercial Driver's License that allows the operation of vehicles of 26,000 pounds or more before completing their 12-month probationary period.

This test is given approximately every two years. When the test date is announced,

the civil service application must be sent directly to the Civil Service Commission.

## **Fisheries Technician/ Fisheries Biologist I**

Employees in these classes perform a variety of entry-level assignments either in fisheries management or fisheries research. They conduct stream and impoundment surveys, conduct special studies and investigations, compile and analyze technical data leading to recommendations in fisheries management practices, investigate cases of water pollution and their effects on aquatic life, and assist other state and federal agencies in matters relating to water quality criteria, conservation education and joint resource management. They also devote time to land use planning, the use of aquatic herbicides and testifying at hearings involving fishery resources and water quality. They work in various sections of the Commonwealth.

Fisheries biologist applicants are required to have a bachelor's degree with a major in a biological science including or supplemented by a minimum of nine credits in the fields of aquatic biology, aquatic ecology, fisheries biology or equivalent fields.

Applicants for the fisheries technician position must have two years experience performing limited technical and semi-skilled manual work in the field of fisheries biology, or two years of experience as a Fish Culturist I, or two years of college that included a combination of nine credits in biology or a related science, or any equivalent combination of experience and training. The applicant must possess a valid PA driver's license.

Civil service exams are administered approximately every two years for the fisheries technician and less frequently for the fisheries biologist. When the exams are announced, applicants must complete a civil service application and send it directly to the Civil Service Commission. There is no written test for the fisheries biologist. They are given a rating based on their education and experience. They still must complete an application plus addendum and send it to the Civil Service Commission.

## **Fish Culture Station Foreman**

This is supervisory and advanced technical work at a fish culture station. This person supervises employees engaged in the care and propagation of fish and in



the operation of a fish culture station. Work includes supervision of fish culturists and related employees performing fish culture tasks such as spawning, grading and sorting fish, and maintenance tasks such as making repairs to buildings, grounds and equipment. Assignments are received in the form of general instructions and are performed with considerable independence of action. Work is reviewed in process and on completion by the fish culture station manager or technical supervisor.

This applicant must have one year of experience as a Fish Culturist 2 or two years of technical experience in the propagation and care of food fish or game fish, and graduation from high school or equivalent certification of formal training, or any equivalent combination of experience and/or training that provides the required knowledge, skills and abilities. An applicant must possess a valid PA driver's license. The civil service test is conducted approximately every three years.

### **Waterways Conservation Officer**

Waterways conservation officers perform specialized law enforcement work in fisheries conservation and watercraft safety. Work consists of enforcement of state fish and boat regulations, public information and education, stream improvement and boating safety. Typical duties include patrolling by foot, car and boat to detect, pursue and apprehend violators, issue citations or field acknowledgment receipts, serve warrants, present evidence at hearings and court proceedings, investigate cases of water pollution, and fish stocking. Duties also include public speaking and coordination of the activities of volunteer deputy waterways conservation officers.

Officers work long, varied hours, holidays and weekends. Work is performed in all kinds of weather and in rough terrain. Lifting heavy weights such as buoys, boats and motors may be required. These employees receive a large volume of telephone inquiries at their residence/offices on a seasonal basis.

An applicant must be a high school graduate or have equivalent certification or any combination of experience and/or training that provides the required knowledge, skills and abilities. Applicants must be willing to accept residence in any part of the state, locate in a specific geographic area, and be reassigned from district to district as requested. An applicant must possess a valid PA driver's license. Applicants must be able to swim continu-

ously for a minimum of 10 minutes or 250 yards. An applicant must be of good moral character and physically capable of performing the duties of the position. Civil service tests are usually conducted every two to three years.

### **Engineering and drafting positions**

Employees in these classes are involved with the planning, survey, design and construction of Commission facilities, site-engineered structures and aquatic resource projects. Their job descriptions and requirements vary.

### **Non-civil service jobs**

The remainder of our jobs are non-civil service. They include such occupations as laborers, clerks, typists, equipment operators, skilled tradespeople and education specialists. To apply for positions in this category, contact our office or the Division of State Employment, Room 110, Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120.

### **Seasonal employees**

Some 150 seasonal or temporary employees are hired each year. These jobs in such areas as fish culture, fisheries management, fisheries research, fisheries environmental services, maintenance, construction and office services are classified as laborers, semi-skilled laborers, clerk-typists and fisheries biologist aides. Most positions have a duration up to nine months and are filled between February and November of each year. To apply, complete a non-civil service application and return it to the Division of State Employment or the Fish and Boat Commission's Personnel Office.

### **Internships**

This agency is involved in intern programs designed to provide valuable work experience and exposure for students to the professions they are pursuing. The program centers on professionally oriented work, such as conducting stream and lake examinations, presenting public programs and preparing research papers. Both office and field work are involved. On-the-job training is provided to orient the student to the agency and the work. Participation is year-round. Normally, the student intern pays tuition, receives credits and does not receive wages from the agency.

### **Volunteer opportunities**

Most bureaus have opportunities for individuals or groups to volunteer their time

and talents. Each bureau may have separate requirements for such items as training, uniforms, education, age, stipends and travel expense reimbursement. If you are interested in any of these volunteer opportunities, please contact the Personnel Office for a volunteer application. Complete it and return to the Personnel Office. It will be forwarded to the appropriate bureau.

The Volunteer Education and Information (E/I) Corps provides a variety of services including giving fishing or filleting demonstrations, leading casting activities for children, giving presentations for civic groups, teaching fishing at one-day events, working exhibits or providing information.

The KARE Fishing Skills Instructor Program certifies those who wish to present "Fishing Skills and Aquatic Education" classes through the Keystone Aquatic Resource Education (KARE) program. If you are involved with a youth-oriented organization, you might be interested in teaching these classes. The children who complete the classes learn basic aquatic ecology, safety, outdoor manners, conservation, and—of course—how to fish!

The deputy waterways conservation officers work with waterways conservation officers to enforce fish, boat and environmental rules and regulations. Weekend hours are a must. To apply, you must be a PA resident, 21 years of age, reside in the district of the officer with whom you interviewed, have full use of all limbs, 20/20 vision (or correctable to) with correct color vision, able to use firearms with each hand, be physically able to perform CPR, swim, engage in physical exercise, and have no criminal record.

The Boating Safety Instructor Program is looking for instructors to teach classroom and in-water boating courses to adult or youth groups. These courses are designed to provide boaters with basic information on boating and water safety to keep them safe while on the water.

The Bureau of Properties and Facilities Management has a program in its Habitat Management Section called Adopt-a-Stream and Adopt-a-Lake. Local groups sponsor a cleanup or fish habitat improvement projects on a waterway. The Fish and Boat Commission provides assistance and materials if the club provides the manpower.

Direct questions on employment to: Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Personnel Office, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000; phone: (717) 657-4528.





# The Grannom

by Chauncy K. Lively

The Grannom is a caddis fly that first earned popularity in the streams of the British Isles many years ago. James Chetham described the insect in the 17th century and devised a wet fly to match it. Many other English angler-authors followed suit, and more than a few concocted their own patterns.

One of the most interesting studies of the Grannom in modern times was made by David Jacques, an eminent English author and Trichoptera authority. He reared many Grannom specimens in captivity—in a contraption with running water he called a Traystream—and made a detailed microscopic study of each phase of the insect's life cycle, from the hatching of the egg to the death of the adult insect. Particularly fascinating was Mr. Jacques' observation that within moments after the larvae hatch they begin playing like puppies.

David Jacques' study of the Grannom is contained in his book, *Fisherman's Fly*, published by A. and C. Black, London.

Like many trout stream insects in the U.S., our Grannom is a close relative of its British counterpart. Both are members of the genus *Brachycentrus* and they share many characteristics in common. Both our *B. fuliginosis* and the British *B. subnubilis* appear early in the season and generally in great numbers. It is an important hatch wherever it is found and is well-represented on Pennsylvania's trout streams. On the streams of the Catskills the same insect is often referred to as the Shad Fly, a name given it by Louis Rhead.

Grannoms are case-building caddis flies. The structures housing the larvae are tapered and square in profile. They pupate in relatively shallow water and the pupae rise to the surface to emerge.

The adults, like many other insects, may vary somewhat in appearance from stream to stream. The body is generally blackish and the wings range from deep brown to medium



gray. The most apt description I've heard of the Grannom in flight is that it appears dirty gray.

The early spring appearance of the Grannom often coincides with some of the more well-known mayfly hatches, and this may prove advantageous. I can remember Opening Day trips to the Yellow Breeches to fish the anticipated Hendrickson hatch, but on arriving, I learned that an early spring had triggered the hatch on an earlier date. As a consequence, the hatch had come and gone before we arrived. But not to worry. The Grannom, which emerged over a longer time, was still present in good numbers and provided fine backup fishing.

My own version of the Grannom uses Wonder-Wings of grizzly hackles dressed downwing style. These wings are fashioned of webby hackles by stroking the barbules downward and tying in with the barbs reversed. The unreversed hackle tips—the ears—are left in place until the final steps. As upwings on mayfly-type

dry flies, Wonder-Wings are vulnerable to tearing by the sharp teeth of trout, particularly in medium or large sizes. However, the Grannom is dressed in sizes 16 or 18 and its downwings make a much smaller target. A measure of durability may be added by applying a drop of vinyl cement to the outside surfaces of the tips and butts of each wing after they are in place.

The pattern's body of dubbed muskrat fur darkens considerably when wetted. The hackles are brown and grizzly—the familiar

Adams combination—wound reverse-palmer from front to rear and tied off at the top of the bend. The whip finish is made at the rear of the body. If this is difficult to visualize, just remember that it's nothing more than a hand whip finish with the open loop going around the entire fly instead of merely around the shank behind the eye. But if it is still a problem, a couple of half-hitches and a drop of cement suffice as a substitute. As a final step the hackle is trimmed underneath to ensure a low-floating posture.

Many fly fishers find it advantageous to twitch their dry flies occasionally during the float when fishing caddis hatches, imitating the nervous behavior of the naturals on the surface. With its under-trimmed hackle, the Wonder-Wing Grannom is well-adapted to this technique, particularly if the hackles are of prime quality. But if the fly should duck under the surface during twitching, it's not a problem. When this occurs a silvery air bubble envelops the hackle, resembling the bubble entrapping the female caddis as she submerges to deposit her eggs. It is a signal that often triggers an immediate response from trout.

## Dressing: Wonder-Wing Grannom

**Hook:** Size 16 or 18 regular shank, dry fly.

**Thread:** 6/0 olive prewaxed.

**Body:** Dubbing of muskrat fur.

**Wonder-Wings:** Webby grizzly hackles.

**Hackle:** One each, grizzly and brown.





# The Grannom



**1** Tie in the thread behind the eye and wind back to the bend. Apply a dubbing of muskrat fur to the thread and wind forward to form a tapered body ending 1/8-inch behind the eye.

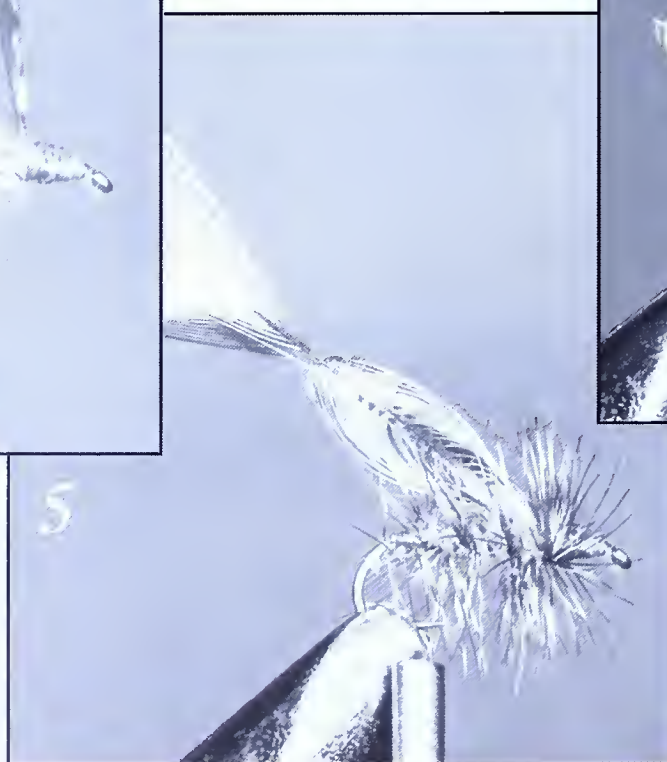


**2** Select two webby grizzly hackles and hold them together back to back. Hold the tips with the right hand and with the left, stroke the barbules downward and hold. Bearing in mind that the wing length should equal the hook length, cut the hackle ribs at the appropriate point with fine-pointed scissors.

**3** With the right hand withdraw the severed feather butts and discard.




**4** Manipulating the thread with your left hand, tie in the wings and secure with several turns. Trim the excess barbules in front. Apply a drop of vinyl cement to the outside surface of the base and tip of each wing. Then tie in the hackles together in front of the wings, at right angles to the shank, on edge, with dull sides facing the eye. Then lift the wings by their ears and wind the thread back over the body in four or five spaced turns to the bend.



**5** Again, lift the wings and wind the first hackle (either one) a full turn in front of the wings and over the thread ribbing, back to the bend. Tie off. Repeat with the second hackle.



**6** Trim off the "ears" of the wings and make a whip finish at the rear of the body. Trim the hackles underneath the body. After lacquering the head windings and whip finish, the Wonder-Wing Grannom is completed. 



# On the Water

with Robert L. Petri

## Are You a Stickler or an Explorer?

A self-proclaimed great philosopher once clued me in on what he thought was the defining secret of life. There are, he intoned, only two kinds of people in the world; those who prefer their ham and cheese sandwich with mustard, and those who prefer it with mayonnaise. When I told him that I liked mine best with a thin coating of hot pepper relish, his world came unhinged. I haven't heard from him since.

All that aside, years of tramping the banks of Pennsylvania's vast array of trout and bass streams and rivers have convinced me that my friend's notion had some fundamental merit. He simply chose the wrong vehicle to express his idea. You see, I believe that there are only two kinds of stream anglers—the stickler or the explorer. You are either one or the other.

The stickler plants himself in a favorite spot in a favorite pool, and proceeds to dare the fish therein to outlast him. He casts again and again and yet again to the same spot. Occasionally, he pauses just to look at the water, or maybe he edges up or downstream a few feet. Then he resumes casting. He is methodical, persistent and confident. And why shouldn't he be? The fish are there, he will tell you. It's just a matter of wearing them down, or switching to the right lure or fly, or getting the right drift through the pool. He stays the morning right where he stands. Sticklers seldom do anything to void the warranty on their waders. For that matter, sticklers seldom need to buy new waders. Sticklers catch fish—a lot of fish.

The slam of a car door announces the arrival of our other angling type, the explorer. Even while he is donning his boots and assembling his gear, he is looking up the creek. As he crawls down over the bank, he is already making plans for places that are out of sight and three bends upstream from the stickler. The angling portion of his brain doesn't think in terms of pools, but instead in sections of water—long sections of water.

Like Sherman on his way through Georgia, the explorer is an inexorable force marching ever onward in search of the next run, the next pool, the next opportunity. When he visits a stream for the first time, he is uncontrollable. What will he find? Are there better pools and bigger fish up above? The explorer learns the answers to these questions or perhaps perishes in the attempt.

Explorers keep the sporting boot industry in business. They complain among one another that there is no boot, regardless of price, that can be expected to last for more than a season or two. And they simply cannot understand why.

Explorers count their fish, and sometimes keep detailed records. Those who put their minds to it invariably become good golf-

ers. Explorers tend to be skinny, and consume large amounts of water and soft drinks to keep them from overheating. They own two-year-old cars that already have 75,000 miles on them. Indeed, they are much like their cars in that they, too, are driven.

Explorers probably catch fewer fish on average than sticklers. But they see a whole lot more of Pennsylvania.

By way of confession, I have to admit that I am an explorer. The roots of the matter probably go back to those grade school report cards I used to bring home. In the dread comments section below the actual grades, mine always said things like: "Bob is considerate of his classmates, and gets along well with almost everyone. I only wish we could get him to sit still for more than a minute or two at a time..." Even then, the wanderlust was on me.

My father is the consummate stickler. I remember many an opening day of trout season from my youth when I would return from a three-hour blitz of the upper section of our favorite stream, out of breath with a collection of scratches or maybe even a punctured boot, to find my Dad standing pretty much where I left him. He always had at least twice as many fish as I did, and he was convinced that there was at least one more in his pool, and he was determined to take him. There usually was and he usually did. Then, and only then, would he move to another pool or another stream.

Is there an advantage to one approach or the other? Does the "smart" angler gravitate toward either of these two widely disparate poles of angling thought? Probably not. The forces that make each of us either an explorer or a stickler are logical extensions of who we are as people. Patience is a virtue; but then again, so is a soul full of curiosity and adventure. Each brings different joys and equally memorable experiences. The stickler may have the satisfaction of fooling that last, stubborn fish in the pool, but he misses the heart-stopping explosion of that pair of twin fawns that the explorer all but stepped on up the creek.

Who can say which is more meaningful, or for that matter, better? It's all in the eye of the beholder. I only know that as long as new hip boots are within my financial reach, and I am able to put one foot in front of the other in some sort of reasonable cadence, I will find out what's up around the next bend. To me, it's a big part of what fishing is all about.

So which are you, stickler or explorer? While you're thinking it over, I believe I'll have another ham and cheese with hot pepper relish, and go see what it looks like up above. After all, I've never been there before.



ANGLER



# Fall Trout Fishing

in

## Southeast Pennsylvania

by Vic Attardo

The sad irony of autumn is that this rich, beautiful season ends so quickly. No sooner have the leaves reached their peak color when Mother Nature whisks them away and we're left with naked trees and a long wait until spring.

But in this seasonal change lies the possibility of some great fishing. Cool nights help reduce water temperatures, and the fish, sensing that the kitchen is about to close, go on a voracious feed.

In the southeast corner of the state, fall's zenith lingers a tad longer than in the northern counties, and for this reason, I like to think the down-state quadrant has some of the best late-season trout fishing.

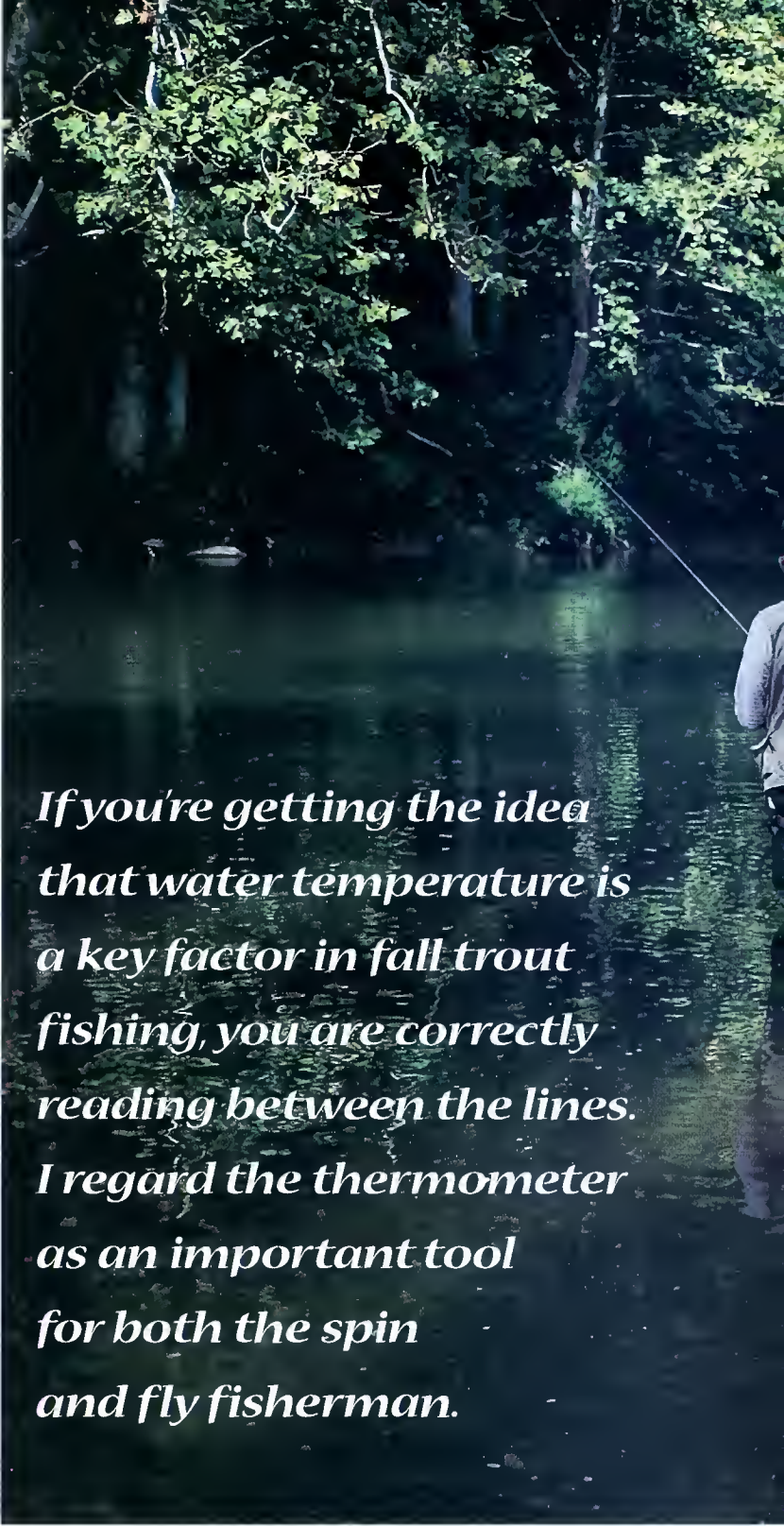
In 1989, in the hope of providing more autumn sport, the Fish and Boat Commission began an experimental program stocking two streams in the Philadelphia area with both brown and rainbow trout. Because of the apparent success and expansion of this pilot project, opportunities for fall trout angling have increased throughout the region.

Last year, the autumn program went statewide and included a new list of urban streams and park lakes. This year the program encompasses the stocking of delayed-harvest streams throughout the state.

According to Area 6 Fisheries Manager Mike Kaufmann, fall stocking gives anglers a chance to catch trout not only in October and November but through January and February as well.

"We don't want a situation where all the fish are gone in a few days," Kaufmann says. "We want these fish to be around over a period of time, particularly into the winter."

Because most southeastern streams become too warm to support trout in the summer, spring stockings are meant as put-and-take fishing. But in the fall, with cooler water temperatures, stocked browns and rainbows can provide a longer fishery.



*If you're getting the idea  
that water temperature is  
a key factor in fall trout  
fishing, you are correctly  
reading between the lines.  
I regard the thermometer  
as an important tool  
for both the spin  
and fly fisherman.*

"The true angler can appreciate that he can go out to a stream, and providing decent weather, catch a few fish throughout most of the year," Kaufmann says.

In the late 1980s, Wissahickon Creek in Philadelphia and Ridley Creek in Delaware County were the program's initial targets.

"Because of the sheer number of anglers in these areas I thought these streams would receive exceptional use in the fall," Kaufmann says, "but we didn't know how the idea would be received."

Apparently it was quite popular. A 1991 creel survey found that over a period of just nine days, fishermen had spent nearly 3,000 hours on the Wissahickon. And after the initial rush, like the one surrounding Opening Day in April, some 60 percent of the fish were still finning around in the stream.

With these impressive results, the Commission expanded its list of fall stockings in 1994. This year the list of streams and lakes scheduled to receive visits from the hatchery truck in the 10-county corner include both the Wissahickon Creek and Ridley Creek; Lake Luxembourg, Levittown Lake and the East Branch





*Royal Wulff, Black Gnat,  
Black Ant, Parachute  
Blue-Winged Olive  
and Cricket*

*Conestoga Creek,  
Lancaster County*

of the Perkiomen Creek in Bucks County and Jordan Creek and the Little Lehigh in Lehigh County; farther north and east, Antietam Creek, Hay Creek and Scotts Run Lake in Berks County; Bushkill Creek in Northampton County; Muddy Run Lake in Lancaster County; Upper Rexmont Dam in Lebanon County and Tuscarora Lake in Schuylkill County will also receive a fall stocking.

According to Kaufmann, the program has so far concentrated on urban and suburban streams because these streams were more likely to receive ample angler use. But with the inclusion of delayed-harvest waters, those designated both as artificial-lures and fly-fishing-only streams, the geography of fall stocking will broaden.

In the southeast, delayed-harvest, fly-fishing-only waters scheduled for a fall stocking include: French Creek in Chester County; Ridley Creek in Delaware County; Donegal Creek and the West Branch of Octoraro Creek in Lancaster County and the Little Lehigh in Lehigh County.

Delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only streams include: West Valley Creek and Pickering Creek in Chester County; Quittapahilla Creek in Lebanon County and Bear Creek and the Little Schuylkill River in Schuylkill County. In addition to the fall stocking, some of these delayed-harvest streams have a number of holdover trout for fishermen to pursue.

But for anglers whose sporting tastes go beyond the qualities of stocked trout, there are ample opportunities in the southeast for wild trout fishing as well.

It may surprise some fishermen that the southeast contains at least 84 miles of documented Class A wild trout waters. That's amazing considering the human population and the way many of these streams have been treated.

Generally speaking, anglers can find wild trout in the headwaters and tributaries of some of the southeast's larger streams. Where the creeks flow wide and deep through suburban areas and small towns, those waters belong to stocked trout, sunfish and smallmouth bass. But follow the streams to their hilly origins



and you are likely to find fishable populations of wild trout.

Some of the Class A wild trout waters in the southeast include: In Berks County, Hay and Sacony creeks, the West Branch of the Perkiomen, and two tributaries of the Manatawny, Pine and Bieber creeks; in Lancaster County, Conowingo Creek; in Northampton County, Fry's Run and Cooks Creek and in Montgomery and Chester counties, Valley Creek. All have a good density of wild brown trout if you are willing to get off the beaten path and search. But don't forget that landowner permission is necessary on many of these beats.

An unusual case in the southeast's fall fishing picture is Tulpehocken Creek in Reading. Even though the "Tulip" contains a delayed-harvest, artificial-lures-only area, it is stocked with fingerling trout, not mature fish.

# Fall Trout Fishing

in  
*Southeast Pennsylvania*

## Fishing methods

Worms and salmon eggs are the most popular method of fishing for spring hatchery trout, but Kaufmann believes these baits are not as successful in catching late-season fish. In fact, on delayed-harvest streams, bait is prohibited.

A confirmed lure fisherman, Mike chooses his autumn technique depending on a stream's water level. In periods of low flow, he uses small floating-minnow lures or spinners. When the water is high, he selects a piece of hardware a lot of anglers don't even keep in their arsenal

for stream trout—a small spoon, one about a quarter-ounce in weight.

Even though Mike claims no color preference for minnow baits and spinners, he is partial to gold-colored spoons in off-color water.

Casting his lure across and downstream, Kaufmann works with different speed retrieves until he finds one that works best.



## Southeast Pennsylvania Fall Trout Hotspots

1. West Valley Creek, Chester County.
2. French Creek, Chester County.
3. East Branch Perkiomen Creek, Bucks County.
4. Hay Creek, Berks County.
5. Antietam Creek, Berks County.
6. Little Schuylkill River, Schuylkill County.
7. Bear Creek, Schuylkill County.
8. Wissahickon Creek, Philadelphia County.
9. Ridley Creek, Delaware County.
10. West Branch Octoraro Creek, Lancaster County.
11. Jordan Creek, Lehigh County.
12. Little Lehigh Creek, Lehigh County.
13. Bushkill Creek, Northampton County.
14. Quittapahilla Creek, Lebanon County.



As the frosty nights of October and November chill the water, Mike says a slow, steady retrieve is what most trout want.

Mike's techniques are relatively simple, but fall trout fishing can become a real chess match if one is willing to play the game of autumn insect hatches.

In the southeast, anglers find a variety of aquatic creatures still rising from the streambed throughout the fall. Consistent hatches in the early part of the season include the tan caddis, yellow midges, Baetis, Sulphurs and Isonychia. In the later part of the season, olives and darker midges dominate.

Last fall was wonderfully mild and I witnessed dense hatches of a grayish-tan caddis into the middle of October on Bucks and Northampton County waters. On the Bushkill above Easton trout were rising in the riffles for these supposedly tasty morsels when the water temperature was only 50 degrees.

Considering the variety of insect life, patterns that fly fishermen should not be without in the fall include Elk Hair and X-wing caddises, the Henryville Special, Blue-Winged Olives, Blue Quills, trico spinners, midge and midge emergers, ants and the Black Gnat, the dipterium imitation.

Matching the hatch is one aspect of fall trout fishing, but autumn is also the time when I believe many of the attractor patterns come to the forefront. I just wouldn't leave home in October and November without a good supply of Royal Wulffs and Ausable Wulffs in sizes 12 and 14.

On the southeast's wild trout waters the Wulff series is perfect for the short pockets and flat riffles of these narrow streams. Amid the rocky flows, the trout don't have a lot of time to inspect a fly as it floats through a pool no longer than a yard or two long. When a hungry 12-inch brown sees a well-presented Royal Wulff in these conditions, he will charge from his hiding place to take a big gulp, no questions asked. In these settings a high-floating fly is indispensable.

But don't get the impression that small-stream fishing in the fall is a single-fly affair. One reason some anglers don't do well in these narrow streams is the fact that they fail to switch flies as often as they should. After having caught one or two fish from a good pool, it's time to change patterns or fly sizes so the remaining fish get a different look. Think of it as a baseball manager bringing in the relief pitchers to save his starters for another day.

It's customary for spring hatch-matchers to stick to the same pattern if the pattern is working: The fish are keyed into a particular insect and that might be all they'll take. But outside of midge activity, fall trout can act quite differently.

This point was brought home last season when I was working a Montgomery County stream on a sunny afternoon in mid-September. In the course of 10 minutes I had taken two wild browns from a pocket beneath an overhanging sycamore. When I released the fish they swam downstream, so I knew that the risers still dimpling the pool in front of me were different fish.

I tried and I tried but I couldn't get these other trout to take the same Royal Wulff the first browns had swallowed. But when I switched over to a caddis pattern, even though no caddises were showing at the time, two more fish were hooked on successive casts: They simply wanted a different look.

In the fall, whether you are fishing a piece of metal or a hunk of feathers, terminal tackle should be kept light and thin. Often low-water conditions dictate that a spinner be knotted to clear four-pound-test monofilament while fly-line leaders be tapered down to 6x or 7x tippets.

Trial and error was the best teacher as I worked an ant pat-

tern over the Little Schuylkill River once in early September. In trout terms the water temperature had dropped from a toasty 64 degrees to a mild 58 degrees in one week. The fish were rising to a variety of insects, but their movements on this partly cloudy day were a bit sluggish.

Working a size 16 Black Ant on a 5x tippet, I was catching a few fish in the thin water beneath some overhangs. On a couple of occasions I saw fish rise to the ant but refuse it at the last second. This was happening particularly when the fly drifted into a patch of sunlight.

Using the old computer under my hat, I reasoned that the trout coming into the light might be seeing the reflection from my leader. I adjusted the tippet to include about 18 inches of 7x camouflage material and went back to the job site. This time, those wary browns came out of their cover and sipped in my ant as pretty as a picture.

Fall is also a good time to use one of the best dry-fly tactics in the book—the tandem rig. Fly rodders generally think of a two-fly rig as one using two nymphs, or a dry fly and a nymph.

But in low-water conditions, when successive light frosts have dropped the water temperature into the mid-50s, I use a double dry-fly rig in flat water. Hatch activity can be slim in these conditions and it's difficult to know which pattern might tempt a trout.

After testing the waters with an attractor, I tie up a combination caddis and midge imitation—my favorite is a size 16 Henryville Special and a size 22 Griffith's Gnat. The rig is simple. The midge imitation is attached to the bend of the caddis fly hook with 10 inches of 7x tippet and an improved clinch knot. The lead caddis is tied directly to a 5x leader running to the fly line.

I use this combination when fishing over sluggish trout or fish that have felt my hook in the last few days. Often I have to cast repeatedly over the same fish before it moves to my fly. While I'm throwing the same two patterns time and time again, I can surmise only that the tandem set-up gives the trout a slightly different view each time it floats downstream. With the fly's landing in different positions, no two drifts are exactly alike. One note of caution must be stressed, however. When fishing a tandem rig, slow down your casting motion. It prevents a lot of turmoil.

Through all of this if you're getting the idea that water temperature is a key factor in fall trout fishing, you are correctly reading between the lines. I regard the thermometer as an important tool for both the spin and fly fisherman. From September to mid-November, southeast anglers are likely to experience water temperatures ranging from 64 degrees to 50 degrees.

Early in the season, a small spinner ripped through a pool of hungry trout attracts a lot of attention. But a lure gunned in water less than 55 degrees is rarely chased. At that temperature, the retrieve should be slow to moderate. Let the blade turn in the current while the lure advances like a glacier. Nymph fishermen should slowly dawdle their flies across the bottom. But both lure and fly fishermen should watch for those subtle variations when the water temperature climbs a degree or two on sunny days. A perky increase in speed or a quick lift with a wet fly might be just what triggers a trout.

Fall trout fishing in the southeast can be quite a treat. With the new stocking program and an ample supply of wild fish, trout anglers have a full menu to choose from. The only problem with fall fishing is that if you don't take advantage of it today, it will probably be gone tomorrow.

ANGLER



Sparkling like a gem nestled in rich, green hills, Tionesta Lake is situated on Tionesta Creek only two miles from the Allegheny River at the southern edge of the Allegheny National Forest.

Impounded by the Army Corps of Engineers as part of the overall flood control plan for the Allegheny and Ohio watershed, the normal summer pool of 480 acres often doubles during periods of heavy rainfall. Tionesta is the largest lake in Forest County. Actually, if you don't count a few large ponds, Tionesta is the only lake in the county. The lake features a warmwater fishery primarily comprised of muskies, smallmouth bass, crappies and yellow perch.

### Memorable outings

Everyone has stories of angling misadventures. For some fishermen, certain waterways seem to be magnets for these occurrences. For me, Tionesta is one such place.

Consider an outing on the lake in the late summer of 1982—a day indelibly imprinted on my mind. After reaching one of the shallow feeding flats on the lake, I cast a spinnerbait to the right side of a large milfoil clump in about four feet of water. As I walked the bait past the weed clump, a musky almost three feet long bolted from the weed patch, went airborne and crashed down on the spinnerbait. However, the fish missed getting hooked.

Trembling with excitement, I quickly reeled in and fired a second cast to the left side of the weed clump. When the lure reached the weeds, I stalled the spinnerbait and let it helicopter down. A huge dark shadow moved toward the falling bait. At the thump of the bait being inhaled, I set the hook into a solid fish that immediately went into the air.

Expecting a musky, I was surprised to see a huge smallmouth on the end of my line. It was the largest smallmouth I had ever hooked. "My gosh, that's at least seven pounds!" cried my wife, who witnessed the entire incident.

But as if on cue from the comment made by my wife, the line snapped with the twang of a .22 rifle. I have fished that spot every year since without connecting with a fish anywhere near as large.

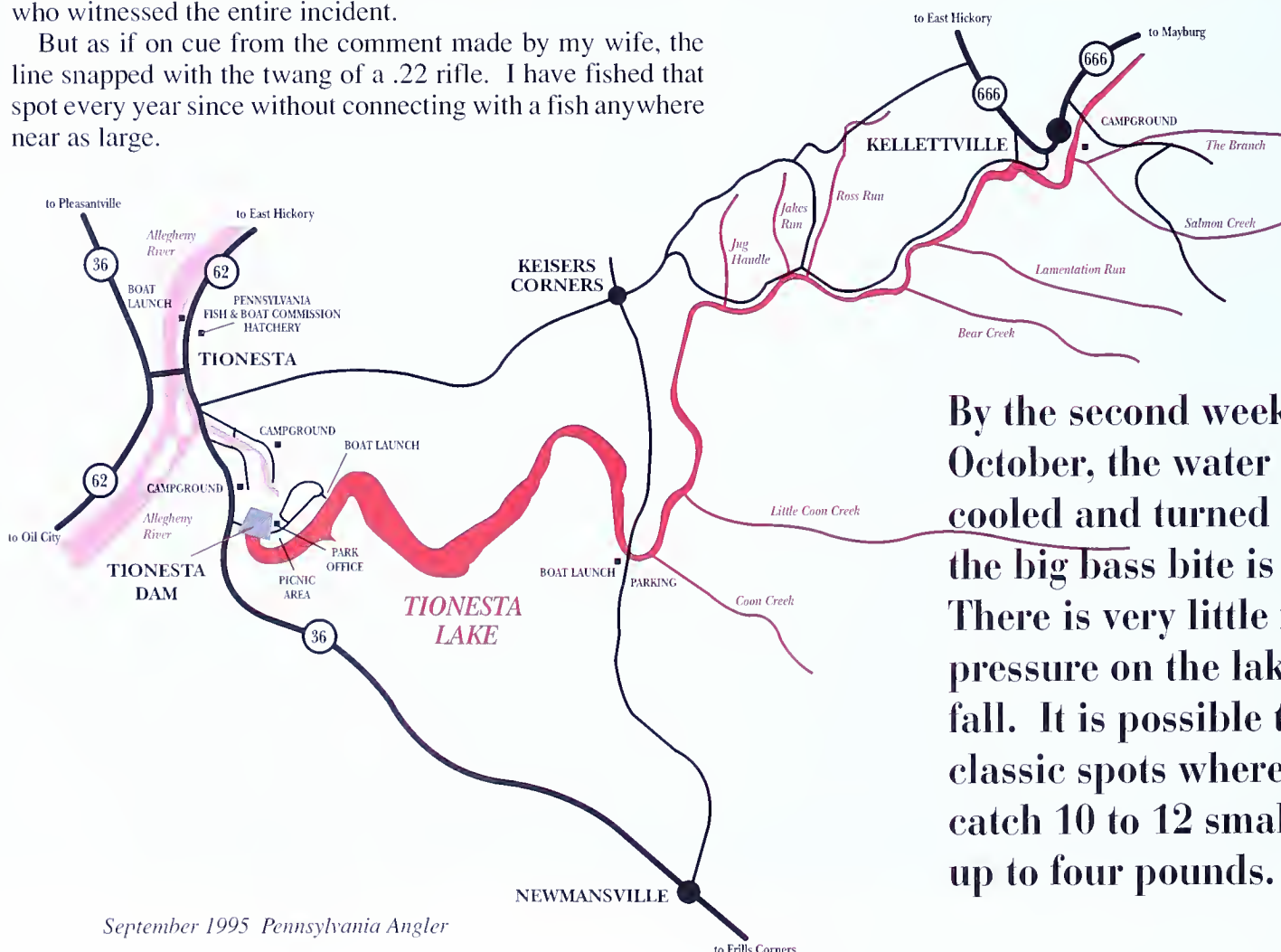
# Tionesta Lake

by Darl Black

Or consider another outing one September day. Casting a large stickbait, I received vicious strikes from eight different muskies in a period of 50 minutes—and never landed one of them. A personal misadventure record!

I can even go back to my very first Tionesta fishing trip during high school years when a friend and I camped on the shoreline for three days. It was one of those "survival outings" where we expected to eat what we caught and gathered. The bite was slow the first afternoon, so by mealtime we were looking at a dinner of one small rock bass—until a 16-inch smallie nailed my topwater lure just as the sun was beginning to sink behind the hills.

After attaching the bass to a snap of a rusty metal stringer and hanging it over the side, my buddy and I took turns rowing our johnboat back to camp. Arriving at the campsite, I reached for the stringer to discover I had apparently failed to secure the snap properly. Only the rock bass dangled from the stringer. Dinner was on the light side that evening.



By the second week in October, the water has cooled and turned over, and the big bass bite is on again. There is very little fishing pressure on the lake in the fall. It is possible to find classic spots where you can catch 10 to 12 smallmouths up to four pounds.





Of course, I'm not the only one with Tionesta misadventure stories. One acquaintance who prefers to remain anonymous was night fishing on Tionesta with a mutual friend when he hooked on a surface lure what he suspected was an enormous small-mouth bass. After fighting the monster for a solid 20 minutes, all the while explaining to his friend how he knew this was a smallmouth and that it just might be a new world's record, the fish came into view of their flashlight. It turned out to be a tail-hooked carp.

Local angler Rob Genter of Tidioute has had memorable Tionesta trips, too. One Christmas Eve after breaking ice at the ramp to launch their boat, Rob and a buddy began casting the shallow flats with lures in search of a musky. Snow flurries hampered visibility somewhat. When Rob cast his lure toward what he thought was a small floating log, the log began moving at the same speed as the lure back to the boat. The obstacle, as you might expect, turned out to be an enormous musky—well over 40 pounds by Rob's estimate.

Rob frantically worked the lure in the recommended figure-eight pattern at boatside to entice a strike. However, the musky simply held near the surface a few feet from the moving lure, watching the exercise. When his arms began to tire, Rob gave up the figure-eight movement. Although his vision was blurred by the snow, Rob swears the musky grinned at him and then slowly sank below the surface.

### What to expect

Two paved ramps serve Tionesta Lake. One ramp, under the jurisdiction of the Army Corps, is located on the lower end of the reservoir near the dam. The second ramp, built by the Commission, is located at the headwaters of the impoundment at Nebraska Bridge. In keeping with the new Army Corps policy,

*Tionesta Lake is a narrow, serpentine waterway surrounded by hills.*

launch fees are now charged at the dam ramp during the summer months but not during the off-season.

On holidays and most summer weekends the main ramp parking lot is filled with vehicles and trailers. Even though quite a distance from large metropolitan areas, Tionesta Lake becomes extremely busy during peak tourist times. On this small impoundment, water skiing traffic often impedes angling opportunities.

The upper one-third of the reservoir is under a 10 mph speed restriction because of the shallow water on either side of the channel. About 3/4-mile above the dam breast is a log boom that establishes a no-wake zone around the dam and gate tower. However, boating and fishing is permitted in the no-wake area, with boat entry gained through a gateway in the boom.

Bank fishing, although permitted anywhere except on the dam breast, is limited because of the largely inaccessible shoreline. A boat is a prerequisite for serious fishing on the lake.

Tionesta is a favorite of boat-in campers. The Corps permits camping at selected sites around the lake, with boats the only way to reach the campsites. Drive-to campsites are located on the outflow below the dam.

Although Tionesta Lake is located between steep mountains, the impoundment's bottom structural characteristics are more typical of reservoirs found in flatter terrain. The upper portion of the lake is comprised of very shallow mud flats with a winding creek channel. The channel in the lower portion of the impoundment averages 20 to 40 feet, with shallow flats that drop directly into the channel. The deepest part of the reservoir is reportedly about 50 feet deep in front of the dam.



## Fishing through the seasons

"Tionesta is a classic structure reservoir that has helped me learn a lot about finding fish in impounded water," says Genter, who, with over 20 years of experience on the reservoir, is truly a Tionesta expert.

He begins fishing the lake in April and continues until the surface freezes in December. Genter says there are a lot of crappies and perch in the lake, but they tend to run on the small side.

"Once in a while, you can get a few bruiser crappies, but most are only five inches in length," says Genter. "I have never taken a walleye or northern pike from the lake, although you do get an occasional trout that moves into the reservoir from Tionesta Creek. I focus my attention on smallmouth bass and muskies.

"Tionesta has a reasonably stable smallmouth bass population," Genter says. "The biggest ones are caught in the cold water of April and again in October and November. A big bass tops off at about five pounds. There are a few largemouths in the lake—very few. I catch maybe two or three a year."

Summer brings a slowdown in the smallmouth bite in both size and number of fish. Night fishing is an option when heavy boat traffic impedes daytime angling attempts.

"There is some shallow-water action in the summer during the low-light periods, but most bass come from 12 to 15 feet of water on the channel dropoffs," Genter says.

"September is a transitional month for bass fishing with very inconsistent catches. There are days you can't catch a single bass even with live bait. However, by the second week in October, the water has cooled and turned over, and the big bass bite is on again. There is very little fishing pressure on the lake in the fall. It is possible to find classic spots where you can catch 10 to 12 smallmouths up to four pounds."

Genter says musky fishing is excellent with numbers of 12- to 20-pound fish caught each year, along with some much larger ones. His personal best is a 34-pounder, although he has hooked and lost bigger ones. Musky fishing in May is spotty. Shallow

# Tionesta Lake

water catches pick up in June. During the summer, the chance for a musky occurs during low-light periods or after dark. Come fall, the shallow water daytime musky bite comes to life again.

"In September, when a cold front moves through, the muskies turn on and the bass turn off," says Genter.

"The average size September musky is 10 to 15 pounds. By October, musky fishing is moving into high gear, with a 20- to 30-pounder possible. And if you stick around until November, that's when the really big boys come out to play. I don't know where they have been all summer, but in the cold water of late fall they are out cruising looking for a big meal. This is the time to get a musky over 30 pounds."

## Lure choices

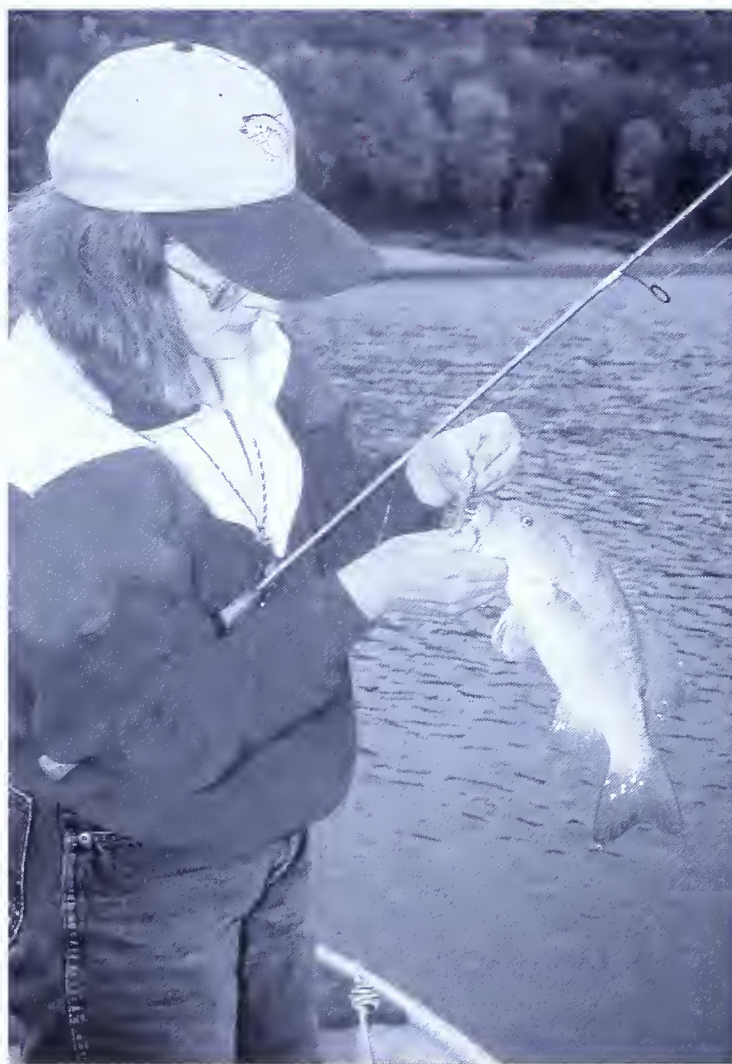
In the early bass season of April, Genter suggests anglers target stumps and rock piles in water less than eight feet deep. The best lures are small crankbaits, stickbaits and soft-plastic grubs.

During summer, a few small bass can usually be teased into taking topwater baits from the clear water of Tionesta. When the bass don't come to the surface, Genter fishes grubs and small worms on the breaklines. In addition to Genter's recommendations, I have good success with

deep-diving crankbaits in the shallow to deep transition zones.

October offers excellent topwater fishing for smallmouths. However, Genter warns that a bass fisherman's surface bait is just as likely to be taken by a musky. In late fall the jig-and-minnow or fly-and-rind (hair jig with pork trailer) fished on deep structure are the top presentations for bass.

Genter and I both agree Tionesta offers an outstanding topwater musky bite. Exactly why this is so, we don't know. However, surface baits like buzzers, Zara Spooks, Jitterbugs and minnow stickbaits are extremely effective from late May to early July, and again from September to December. During the heat of summer, most muskies are taken by trollers pulling large spoons or plugs over the deep water.



## Tionesta Creek Muskies

Tionesta Creek is one of the most popular trout streams in northwest Pennsylvania. The lower reaches of the creek feature many deep pools that are not only home to large trout, but also to smallmouth bass and muskies. Every season, novice anglers are shocked to see a large shadow rise from a pool and rip a struggling trout from the line.

"There are some pretty good-sized muskies in the stream, some perhaps as large as 20 pounds," says Genter. "These fish love to dine on trout and suckers, both of which are plentiful in the creek. Stories of trout-snatching muskies are commonplace as far upstream as Trueman's. Musky anglers looking for a different kind of fishing should consider a float trip on Tionesta Creek armed with a rainbow trout-colored minnow stickbait."—DB.



A fly fisherman wearing a hat, vest, and waders is standing in a river, holding a fishing rod and a net. The background shows a forested bank with some evergreen trees. The word 'FALL' is written in large, stylized letters across the top of the image, with a pattern of autumn leaves inside the letters.

# FALL

## HATCHES

*By Charles R. Meck*

George Harvey and I stood back from the steep cliff overlooking a deep pool on the upper end of Big Fishing Creek. On this late September afternoon we both commented at the number of trout rising to a small, dark-gray mayfly hatch that had suddenly appeared on the surface. Just upstream 10 to 15 feet above us more than a dozen trout developed a feeding rhythm, picking off emerging duns.



As George and I stared at the surface we wondered why so few anglers take advantage of this and several other productive fall hatches. By late September most anglers have quit fishing for the year. The little blue-winged olive hatch on Big Fishing Creek, and on many other streams in the Commonwealth, continues to appear every afternoon for more than a couple of weeks every fall.

Fall—what a beautiful time of the year to fly fish in the Keystone State! Anglers find cool, comfortable temperatures with many streams and rivers still boasting plenty of trout. Yes, I said plenty of trout! Do you also quit for the season and miss some great matching-the-hatch opportunities?

I've experienced some of my best days ever fly fishing state streams in September, October and November. I'm convinced that trout on these fall days often gorge themselves and prepare for the barren days ahead.

I can remember one day in late October in southwestern Pennsylvania when Craig Josephson and I caught more than 60 trout in a day of fly fishing. Craig ended that day, on his very last cast, by releasing a 15-inch brown. For five week-ends in a row Craig and I fly-fished this same stream and consistently caught dozens of trout. On those trips we never once saw another fly fisher.

Many anglers question fly fishing after Labor Day. What about fishing pressure at this time of year? I've experienced many fall days when I'm the only angler on a stream. What about surface-feeding trout and fall hatches? I've had many fall afternoons when I've spotted a dozen or more trout rising in front of me.

What do trout rise for this time of year? You can expect to see little blue-winged olive duns appearing almost every afternoon in September and October on many Pennsylvania streams. All you have to do is travel to streams like Falling Spring or Yellow Breeches in southcentral Pennsylvania; Spring, lower Bald Eagle, or Big Fishing creeks in central Pennsylvania; or Yel-

# FALL HATCHES

low Creek in southwestern Pennsylvania and you can see some explosive fall hatches.

What's the best time to fly fish these fall hatches? What type of day presents the best fly-fishing opportunities? Which hatches can I expect to see? And probably the most important question of all—where can I find these hatches? These are some of the questions I'll try to answer for you.

## When do hatches occur?

It's important to remember that hatches usually appear at the most comfortable time of the day. In fall that most comfortable time of day occurs in the afternoon. Hatches that just a few weeks before appeared in the evening now most often appear from noon to late afternoon. In July and August you'll find slate drakes emerging around 7:00 p.m. Now, just a few weeks later, these same mayflies most often appear in late afternoon. So if you plan to fish the hatches in the fall, plan to be at your favorite stream or river from noon to 5:00 p.m.

## What's the best type of day to fly fish?

Let me cite two experiences with fall fly fishing over hatches. More than 15 years ago I planned to meet several fly fishers from the state of Indiana on Penns Creek in late September. Which hatch would appear that day? Would any hatch appear? When we met just upstream from the lower end of the no-kill section, a cool drizzle fell on the water. How would this affect the fly fishing that afternoon? At the stream I noticed some fairly large mayflies attempting to take off. Few did and most rode the current downstream. Occasionally the three of us saw a rise and a slate drake disappear in the ring.

All three of us quickly tied on size 14 Slate Drakes and began casting to sporadic risers. Within minutes we began catching some hefty brown trout on dry fly patterns. All afternoon slate drakes fought to take flight from the cool, drizzly surface, and few succeeded. Trout fed on laggards all afternoon long.





You'll find great fall slate drake hatches on plenty of Pennsylvania trout streams and rivers. Almost every trout stream in northcentral Pennsylvania hosts a great number of these mayflies. Streams like Lycoming, Loyalsock, First Fork, and others boast respectable hatches of slate drakes. Many of these free-stone streams, however, had warmed considerably during the summer. So the secret to fishing over rising trout is to fish those waters that don't warm too high in the summer. Streams like Elk and Larry's creeks carry holdover and streambred trout and some fall hatches.

Several years ago I fly-fished with Al Bright of Spruce Creek on the Little Juniata River in early October. A cold, leaden sky held fast all day long. A fine drizzle began falling near noon. Commensurate with the light rainfall a small, dark-gray mayfly emerged in fairly heavy numbers for this time of year. Within minutes after the hatch began more than a half-dozen trout took up feeding positions and fed on many of the insects that didn't take flight. For more than three hours Al and I caught trout on a size 20 Blue Dun to copy the hatch.

Around 3:00 p.m. a larger, darker mayfly began emerging. Trout switched from the smaller mayfly to this larger slate drake, and Al and I switched flies to a size 14 Slate Drake. Al landed one heavy fall trout—about a 16-inch holdover brown trout. Mayflies appeared and trout rose until 5:00 p.m.

### Which hatches can you expect to see?

You generally find two types or groups of hatches. First, there are those hatches that continue from summer. This group includes hatches like the white fly, trico, light cahill and cream cahill. Second are those hatches that appear in September and October. Many members of this second group appeared earlier in the summer and produce a second generation in early fall. Hatches like the little blue-winged olive, blue dun and slate drake reappear, possibly a little smaller, in the fall.

I've already encountered trico hatches on Pennsylvania streams into mid-November. Spruce Creek, Falling Spring Run and dozens more hold this small spinner fall sometimes well into October and even November. If you live in the southern half of the state, your chances of hitting this hatch in early and late fall are even better. George Harvey postulates that the trico usually ends its heaviest emergences after the first heavy fall frost.

Tricos have two generations per year, and this extends the hatch well into fall on many Keystone streams. The first generation appears from mid-July until mid-August on most streams, and the second generation emerges from mid-August until early October. If you encounter a fairly warm fall, you'll find trico spinners falling well into October. Hatches on Falling Spring near Chambersburg often continue well into November.

On some streams in early and mid-September you find a second mayfly that continues appearing from August. I've seen hatches of white flies on the Little Juniata River appearing as late as early October if the weather cooperates. Even at this late date

*Little blue-winged olive dun*



I've caught trout rising to the hatch.

Another light-colored mayfly continues from July and August. The cream cahill, when it emerges, looks somewhat like the white fly. Because both appear at the same time of the year, many anglers confuse the two. You can correct any misidentification immediately in several ways. First, the cream cahill never emerges in the numbers that the white fly does. Second, when the cream cahill leaves the surface, it rises to nearby trees to rest, and changes to a spinner. The white fly seldom rises more than a few feet above the water's surface and never rests.

Throughout the summer you'll find plenty of blue quills appearing on Pennsylvania trout waters. Anglers often confuse the mating flight of these with the trico. Blue quills continue to appear well into September

and even into October, so it's important to carry plenty of size 18 Blue Quill patterns with you.

I mentioned earlier that many of the hatches you encounter in the fall have more than one generation a year. That means the mayfly produces a brood more than once a year. You find many of these appearing again in the fall.

Another hatch you'll encounter if you consistently fly-fish Pennsylvania waters in the fall is the little blue-winged olive (*Baetis tricaudatus*). This hatch appears twice each year. If you've fly-fished much in March and April, you've probably encountered this hatch in the spring. The same hatch reappears again in the fall. On many streams and rivers the spring hatch appears larger than the fall hatch and it's imperative that you carry Little Blue-Winged Olives in sizes 18 and 20.

The slate drake presents one of the largest hatches to appear in the fall. It also produces two generations each year. The first of these generations appears in late May, June and July. The second generation usually appears in September and October. As with the little blue-winged olive, the first generation of slate drakes is also usually the larger of the two. With the hatch appearing in late May, you can match the hatch with a size 12 imitation—with the fall hatch you need a size 14. Both generations often emerge onto rocks rather than emerging in the surface film. However, those appearing in the fall more often emerge on the surface than those appearing in summer.

Until a few years ago anglers thought that several species made up the slate drake hatch. Now most agree that the hatch emanates from one species, *Isonychia bicolor*.

The little blue dun also boasts more than one generation each year. Anglers often see this hatch three times a year. The blue dun often appears in early May, again in early August, and again in early October. A few years ago entomologists placed this mayfly in the same genus (*Baetis*) as the little blue-winged olive.

### Caddises, terrestrials

So far we've totally neglected any thought that you might encounter any fall caddis hatches on Pennsylvania streams. That's certainly not true. On many of the state's smaller streams in October and November I've seen tan caddis flies appearing.





These downwings appear on enough streams and at times when few others appear that they can be extremely productive to copy. Copy this caddis in a size 14 pattern with a tan poly body. Craig Josephson ties this pattern with a tan poly body and palmer's the body with an orangish-brown hackle. If you look closely at the natural you'll detect a bit of an orange hue to the body.

Don't forget to carry some terrestrials with you on those early fall outings. Winged ants can appear in such heavy numbers and with plenty of feeding trout that they constitute a hatch. It happened to me more than 20 years ago on a warm September afternoon. For more than four hours trout fed on an unending supply of ants landing on the surface. Trout continued to feed well after 5:00 p.m. A size 20 Dark-Brown Ant pattern took plenty of risers on that warm fall afternoon.

Do you think that these fall hatches occur only in the central part of the state? You'll see in the accompanying chart that most parts of the state boast fall hatches. Hatches continue well into October and even early November on southern streams like Falling Spring and Yellow Breeches. Southeastern streams like the Little Lehigh in Allentown boast a good number of little blue-winged olives in September and October. And don't overlook small-stream fly fishing in the fall. On just about every stream, from Jenkins Run near Ridgway to Sixmile Run near Philipsburg, you'll find tan caddis flies emerging and trout chasing them in early fall.

What will you do this fall? Have you given up on fishing the hatches and seeing trout rising in front of you? Don't quit too early!

## SOME KEYSTONE STREAMS WITH FALL HATCHES

### Northwest

Thompson Creek

### Southwest

Clover Creek  
Yellow Creek

### Northcentral

First Fork of the  
Sinnemahoning  
Little Pine  
Elk Creek

### Southcentral

Yellow Breeches  
Falling Springs

### Northeast

Delaware River

### Southeast

Little Schuylkill River  
Little Lehigh  
Quittapahilla  
Valley Creek  
Tulpehocken Creek

### Central

Penns Creek  
Fishing Creek  
Little Juniata River  
Lower Bald Eagle  
Spring Creek  
Larry's Creek





# Cast and Caught



W. Dean Zimmerman, Greensburg, shows off two walleyes he caught while fishing on Pymatuning Lake. The larger fish measured 22 1/2 inches. Length of the smaller fish is unknown.



New Kensington resident Thomas Edgar caught and released this smallmouth bass while fishing on Lake Erie. The fish weighed 4 pounds, 13 ounces and measured 19 inches long. Nice bass, Thomas!



Easton resident Bill Reiss shows off the striped bass that earned him a Senior Angler Award. He caught the fish in Lake Wallenpaupack. The fish weighed 11 pounds, 9 ounces and measured 30 inches long.



Ron Young, New Castle, caught this musky on a jig. The fish, caught in Conneaut Lake, weighed 38 pounds and was 52 inches long.



Lebanon resident David J. Allwein was fishing on Lake Erie when this steelhead grabbed his lure. The fish measured 31 1/4 inches long and weighed 13 pounds, 10 ounces.



## Cold-Weather Life Jacket Proposal Advanced

A proposal that would require all persons to wear a personal flotation device (PFD) when aboard small boats during cold-weather months has been advanced by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. The proposed rulemaking received tentative approval at the Commission's July 24 meeting at Camp Hill.

Specifically, the Commission proposes that all persons be required to wear a Coast Guard approved Type I, II, III or V personal flotation device when in a boat less than 16 feet in length or any canoe or kayak from November 1 to April 30. A public comment period will be held before any action on final adoption is taken.

Commission records show that over the last 10 years, 33 people died in canoes, kayaks and boats under 16 feet during the November 1 through April 30 period. Of those, only seven were wearing a life jacket at the time of death.

"There are boating accidents where, for a variety of causes, people do die even though they are wearing life jackets. However, wearing a life jacket remains the single most important thing a person can do to help ensure survival in the event of a boating accident. This is particularly true during times when cold water greatly diminishes a person's ability to save oneself once overboard," said Commission Boating Accident Review Officer Dan Martin.

"There were 26 fatalities in small boats during the months of November through April in which the victims were not wearing a PFD at the time of their death. The vast majority of those victims would have survived if life jackets had been worn," Martin said.

Martin projects that if the proposed regulation is enacted, at least two to three boating-related deaths will be prevented every year.

Action on a second proposal that would require PFDs be worn by children 12 years of age and younger at all times while on the open deck of a boat less than 26 feet in length was tabled for further review.

The Commission's consideration of expanded PFD regulations for children comes at a time when a national push for similar requirements is gaining strength. The National Transportation Safety Board and the National Academy of Pediatrics have both recommended that Congress and the states adopt regulations mandating that children wear life jackets.

Among other action items at the meeting were:

- Commissioner Howard E. "Gary" Pflugfelder of New Cumberland was elected Commission President for 1995-96. Commissioner Donald N. Lacy, Reading, will serve as Vice President.

- A proposal to create slow minimum height swell speeds on areas of the Delaware River, Bucks County, was given tentative approval. Boats would be limited to minimum height swell speed at Franklin Cove and from the mouth of Paunacussing Creek, approximately 3,000 feet to Green Hill Road. Boats would also be limited to minimum height swell speed while passing under the Route 263 (Stockton-Center) Bridge, the Route 202 Toll Bridge and Route 179 (New Hope-Lambertville) Bridge.

A public comment period will be held before any action on final adoption is taken.

- Mauch Chunk Lake, Carbon County, Rose Valley Lake, Lycoming County, and Upper Twin Lake, Westmoreland County, were approved for inclusion in the Big Bass Special Regulation Program.

- Changes to the Late Winter Extended Trout Fishing Program to add Upper Hereford Manor Lake, Beaver County, and Harbor Acres Lake, Butler County, and to delete Lily Lake, Luzerne County, and Lake Winola, Wyoming County, were approved. These designations do not affect total trout allocations.

The Commission will also remove the shore fishing only restriction during March on all waters in this program.

- Inclusion of sections of the following waters in the Wilderness Trout Streams Program were approved: South Fork of Little Conemaugh River, Cambria County, Jeans Run, Carbon County, Vineyard Run, Elk County, South Branch of Kinzua Creek, McKean County, and Roaring Run, Shannon Run, Left Middle Fork of Mill Creek and Right Middle Fork of Mill Creek, all in Westmoreland County.

- The boundaries of the Trophy Trout area on the Lackawanna River, Lackawanna County, were redefined to delete the stretch as defined by the downstream limit of Kendella Park and the upstream limit of Mellow Park.

- A 100-yard stretch of Coplay Creek, Whitehall Twp., Lehigh County, was designated as an exclusive use area for persons with disabilities.

- Petitions from the public to reconsider a 60-horsepower restriction on Laurel Lake, Susquehanna County, to rescind the nighttime speed limit on Harveys Lake, Luzerne County, and the statewide minimum operator age and to create a slow minimum height swell speed at Lake Wallenpaupack were all accepted for staff review.

- Tentative rulemaking prohibiting the use of boats powered by motors on Highland Lake, Bradford County, was approved. A public comment period will be held before any action on final adoption is taken.

- A land exchange of about .5 acres with PennDOT at the Commission's Meadville Access for use in a bridge repair project was approved.

In a separate move PennDOT has offered about one acre near Bull Creek, Allegheny County, acceptance of which was approved.

- The disposition of about .1 acres of land to Porter Twp., Clinton County, was also okayed, pending approval from the General Assembly.

- An exchange of property rights along Tulpehocken Creek, Berks County, to receive an additional 2,000 linear feet of easement was approved, pending final reviews.

- Approval was granted for action to exchange a right of way of some .2 acre near Children's Lake, Cumberland County, with the Appalachian Audubon Society for easement rights along the Yellow Breeches Creek was granted.

- Approval was given to explore possible participation in a land acquisition along the Lehigh River, Lehigh County, pending further staff review. A contribution of \$50,000 by the Fish and Boat Commission to a consortium looking to purchase 157 acres would secure the use of nine acres of stream frontage for small craft launching and parking.

- Approval was given the Executive Director to pursue a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Environmental Protection on a proposed regulation setting royalties for sand and gravel dredging to six percent of the selling price or 25 cents per dry ton/37.5 cents per cubic yard, whichever is higher.

- A policy allowing the acceptance of some conditional donations to the Commission Conservation Acquisition Partnership program was adopted. The policy calls for review of such donations by the Executive Director to determine if such gifts are accepted or rejected.--Dan Tredinnick.





WCO Leo George (center) receives the Commission's Lifesaving Award from Commission President Paul J. Mahon (left) and Commission Executive Director Peter A. Colangelo.

## Officer Lauded for Lifesaving

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) Leo George has earned the agency's Lifesaving Award for rescuing a woman whose car had slid into the Delaware River. George, who is based in Philadelphia, was lauded at the Fish and Boat Commission's quarterly meeting July 24.

George's heroics came on May 13 when patrolling at Frankford Arsenal Access where the woman was attempting to launch her boat. In her attempt to do so, she misjudged the distance between her rear wheels and the river's edge. As a result, the vehicle lost its grip on the launch ramp and began a steady slide into the water.

Recognizing the peril, George first attempted to coach the driver in an attempt to save both her and her vehicle. When the car continued to slide and fill with water, George entered the river where he was forced to break the woman's panicked grip on the steering wheel to pull her free from the sinking car. Moments after WCO George extracted the 67-year-old widow, the car sank completely. It was later recovered submerged in 11 feet of water.—Dan Tredinnick.

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photo: Art Michaels

The Locust Lake State Park fishing pier for the physically challenged opened officially last July 17. The ribbon-cutting dignitaries included (l to r) Buzz Ingram, PA Conservation Corps; Peter Keitssock, Schuylkill Co. TU and United Cerebral Palsy; Donald Mains, Assistant Director, Bureau of State Parks; Fish & Boat Commissioner Donald N. Lacy; Schuylkill Co. WCO Gary L. Slutter; and Kevin Fazzini, Park Manager. The pier was constructed by the PA Bureau of State Parks, Schuylkill County TU, Schuylkill County Sportsmen Association, individual donors, PA Conservation Corps, United Cerebral Palsy and the Fish & Boat Commission.

## Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Bryan*

If you're looking for just one lure for your tackle box that would catch just about every fish that swims, then look no further than a spinner. In its many colors, sizes and patterns, this lure is one of the most famous and often used baits ever made.

It can be difficult and frustrating to change a fly after dark, especially when fish are rising all around. One way to eliminate this problem is to prepare a half-dozen flies ahead of time. Tie 6 inches to 8 inches of tippet to the flies and then tie a loop in the other end. If you also tie a loop in the end of your leader, it becomes a simple matter to rig another fly in the dark should you break one off.

An easy way to get your crankbaits to dive deeper faster is to wrap lead fuse wire around the shanks of the treble hooks. You can vary the sink rate of the lure by adjusting the size and amount of lead wire.

The best way to learn a new lake is to get a topographic map. Look for the mouths of feeder creeks and streams, points next to deep water, islands and humps. Mark these spots with a highlighter so they'll be easy to find the next time you're on the water.

There's no need for a novice fisherman to be overwhelmed by the huge number of different rods and reels available. No matter what your friends might say, two rod and reel combinations can cover virtually all fishing con-

ditions. You basically need a spinning outfit (light-action reel and a medium-light-action rod) for fishing light-line situations, and a baitcasting rod and reel

for lures like crankbaits, spinnerbaits and plastic worms.

Many fly rods have been lost or broken because a fisherman drove away with the rod still laying on the roof of the vehicle. When you return to your car after a day of fishing, lay the rod across the hood of your car. Should you forget to stow it properly after getting out of your waders, you'll see it when you start to drive away.

The length of your fly leader is most often dictated by water conditions. You can get away with shorter leaders and heavier tippets when the water is off-color. In normal situations a 9-foot leader is a good choice, and if the water is very clear, and you are fishing dry flies, you might want to go to a 12-foot leader and lighter tippet.

Make sure to match the size of the bait to the size of the fish you plan to catch. For instance, bluegills and perch have very small mouths, and you should fish with small minnows so they can get them in their mouths. You can use larger minnows for larger fish like bass and walleyes.

When the trout streams are low and the water gets warm and clear during the late summer, the fishing can be tough. The best fishing during these periods can often be found in tailwaters, because the water released from many dams will be cold. Trout feed year-round in these waters.

illustration- Ted Walke



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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- |                      |                      |
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| Channel catfish      | Rock bass            |
| Black crappie        | Striped bass         |
| White crappie        | Brook trout          |
| Largemouth bass      | Brown trout          |
| Purebred muskellunge | Rainbow trout        |
| Tiger muskellunge    | Walleye              |
| Smallmouth bass      | Yellow perch         |

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# Pennsylvania ANGLER



**DAY  
ON THE  
RIVER**

OCTOBER

**7<sup>th</sup>**

see page 29



# *Straight Talk*

## **Teaming With Wildlife: A Natural Investment**

Teaming With Wildlife is an effort to secure stable, long-term funding for nongame fish and wildlife management programs. This effort is currently led by the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA). You may also hear this nongame initiative referred to as the "Fish and Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative," or the "Fish and Wildlife Conservation Enhancement Act." If the initiative receives congressional approval this fall and is signed into law by President Clinton, it is anticipated that it will generate approximately \$350 million annually for state nongame fish and wildlife conservation, recreation and education programs.

How will Teaming With Wildlife be funded? The initiative proposes to place a user fee on certain outdoor equipment and supplies such as camping equipment, backpacking gear, photography equipment, wildlife guides, wild bird seed, etc. The user fee will be administered similarly to the Pittman-Robertson user fee on sporting arms and ammunition (Wildlife Restoration Act), and the Dingell-Johnson user fee on fishing equipment (Sport Fish Restoration Act). These programs have helped recover and manage many fish and wildlife species.

The distribution of this federally controlled money will be based on a state's size and population and willingness to put up \$1.00 for every \$3.00 of federal money received. This means Pennsylvania could receive up to \$13.4 million annually but would have to dedicate \$4.4 million in matching funds for nongame fish and wildlife programs each year.

Some species that would benefit from the Teaming With Wildlife program would include turtles, songbirds, paddlefish, bats, salamanders, darters, frogs, mussels, snakes and lizards.

A recent study showed that over five million of Pennsylvania's 12 million residents participate in wildlife-associated activities such as fishing, hunting, bird watching, nature photography and hiking. Clearly, anglers and hunters are not the only people who have a deep interest in and appreciation for Pennsylvania's fish and wildlife resources. Presently the sportsmen are providing the majority of the money that is needed to manage our fish and wildlife. However, if the Teaming With Wildlife program is legislatively enacted, the funding will ensure that all who enjoy Pennsylvania's woods and waters will contribute to its well-being.

The funds received from the Teaming With Wildlife program would be apportioned to the Fish and Boat Commission and Game Commission. It is anticipated that the agencies will use their current nongame expenditures and potentially a portion of the Wild Resources Conservation Fund (WRCF) as part of the federal matching requirements. Other agencies and organizations will benefit from an anticipated grants program for eligible projects.

Currently the IAFWA and state fish and wildlife agencies have built an impressive coalition of allied conservation organizations. Outdoor equipment manufacturers and federal legislators are also asked by outdoor enthusiasts to support the Teaming With Wildlife funding initiative. The National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, Trout Unlimited, American Birding Association and the Boone and Crockett Club have already agreed to support and campaign for the program.

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Game Commission and the Wild Resources Conservation Fund (WRCF) have already met and have had an informational meeting with a few potential coalition partners. Much more remains to be done. Interested organizations and individuals are encouraged to endorse the initiative formally and write companies and legislators expressing support for the initiative. Sample letters and additional information are available through the Fish and Boat Commission. This initiative is very important to the Commission as a resource conservation agency and all who enjoy Pennsylvania wildlife. I hope you will lend your support by taking the needed action. For more information, call the Commission at (717) 657-4394.



**Peter A. Colangelo**

*Executive Director*

*Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*

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*This issue's front cover, photographed by Barry & Cathy Beck, shows Pennsylvania angler Barry Beck with a really nice rainbow trout.*

## Walleyes in Northwest Pennsylvania—Right Now!

If you're a walleye angler and you fish waterways in northwest Pennsylvania, it may interest you to know that since 1989, the Commission walleye fry stocking program has tripled the number of adult walleyes in Pymatuning Lake.

"Fry stocking has been only moderately successful in the past because in many waterways here plankton doesn't bloom at the correct time when the fry need to find something to eat," says Craig Billingsley, Commission Area 1 Fisheries Manager. "We've tried stocking walleye fry in several lakes. We're finding that Pymatuning is one of the few waterways in which the plankton bloom at the right time."

The walleye fry stocking program there began in 1985. The Commission stocks other waterways in the area with walleye fry, but because of the timing of the plankton bloom, the success in other waterways has been hit and miss. The Commission stocks fry because they're inexpensive to produce. There's no money invested in feeding them. Walleye fry are stocked when they're three days old.

"There's been speculation that the fish in Pymatuning came from natural reproduction," Billingsley says, "so we started otolith tagging in 1989. We use a chemical otolith tag in the fry, and we've discovered that 95 percent of the fingerlings we capture in the fall come from the hatchery."

Last spring Billingsley and his staff tagged adult walleyes with jaw tags, and by June they had 10 percent of the tags back—an unbelievably high return.

"From tagging the adult walleyes we confirmed that harvest is a vital concern in Pymatuning," Billingsley says. "Even though the stocking program is that good there, most of the legal-sized fish are cropped right away. The number of adult fish has tripled, but the average size has stayed the same—about 15 inches, the minimum harvestable size."

October, right now, is the prime time to fish for Pymatuning walleyes. If you hit Pymatuning, you won't be fishing alone. Nevertheless, the waterway has plenty of fish available, and it can take the angling pressure.

You can also find good walleye action in Shenango Lake.  
Also try the tailrace.—Art Michaels, Chief, Magazines and Publications.



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# GO UNDERWATER IN FALL

by Charles R. Meck



For more than 20 years I've looked forward to fly fishing in the fall. Spectacular days with brilliant blue skies often greet the persistent, dedicated angler on these autumn afternoons. But if you've fly fished on these autumn afternoons, then you already know that few anglers take advantage of these early fall outings, so you'll find little competition along many of your favorite streams. Often you'll fly fish an entire October day and never see another angler on the stream. Paths that in early spring showed plenty of use have now almost grown shut. The

only proof that someone had fished the stretch earlier is a forked twig to hold a rod, stuck in the bank along the stream.

For many of my fly fishing years in fall, I'd tie on a size 12 or 14 attractor dry fly like the Wulff Royal Coachman or the Patriot, or an old standby like the Adams, add some dry fly spray, and cast the pattern on some of the state's finest small streams for streambred brown trout and native brookies. I'd catch a fair share of trout—but seldom had an outstanding day—unless a hatch appeared. Slate drakes and little blue-winged olives can



change a so-so day into a spectacular one. On some of those hatch-matching days I did extremely well. But those days when hatches appear can often be chancy this late in the year. And even when you meet a hatch this time of year, it can be short-lived.

Just this past year my fall routine of dry fly fishing changed dramatically—almost completely—in one afternoon. A friend and I fly fished October 8 on a small southwestern Pennsylvania stream. Both of us tied on Patriot dry flies and began working our way upstream. In an hour of intensive fly fishing we caught a combined total of three trout on the attractor pattern—not too impressive for a great fall afternoon on a highly productive stream.

Then it happened—my friend tied on a size 16 weighted Beadhead Pheasant Tail Nymph just six inches behind the attractor pattern and connected it to the dry fly at the bend of the hook with a clinch knot. In the next hour he out-fished me five to one. He caught 10 trout on that wet-fly-behind-the-dry-fly to my two on just a dry fly.

I might be slow but I'm not that stupid—after a futile hour of fly fishing the Patriot, I connected a wet fly behind the dry fly. Guess what? I immediately began to experience many more strikes. Most of the trout that afternoon took the wet fly. Most of the trout preferred staying under the surface rather than taking a dry fly. We never would have caught many of these trout if we hadn't gone underneath that October afternoon. That switch in routine transformed a poor fly fishing day into one we'll never forget.

For the next three October weekends my friend and I used this same technique on small and medium-sized streams throughout western Pennsylvania. And in most cases we experienced unbelievably successful days. On those October fishing trips we invariably caught five or more trout on the wet fly to every one we caught

on the dry fly. How would you like to increase your success ratio immediately by 500 percent? That's what going underwater in fall did for us, and it can do the same for you!

## Depth

Does the depth you fish the pattern make any difference in fall, or for that matter, at any time? You bet it does! Depth can make the difference between a barren, so-so, or a spectacular day. Let me explain.

Three years ago in mid-October Don Bastian, of Cogan Station, and I fly fished on the lower Bald Eagle one late October afternoon. We fished for more than an hour and didn't even experience one strike. Both Don and I fished a long glide that had been productive for me the past couple of years. For more than an hour of hard fishing that day we had nothing to show for it. I fished the tandem with a Patriot and a Beadhead Pheasant Tail Nymph three feet apart. After that futile hour of fly fish-

## Green Weenie



ing I tore the two patterns from the tippet and added more 4X leader between the two. The finished tandem now had almost six feet between the dry fly and wet fly.

It took some practice before I could cast these two very far, but I began fishing the same glide where for an hour before I had not had even one strike. It almost seemed as if I fished a completely new stream for the next hour. Where I caught nothing shortly before, I now caught two heavy holdover brown trout. One of these measured 20 inches long. Just because I sank the pattern deeper on this second try I began catching trout.

Remember, if you don't see a hatch on those October fishing trips, use wet flies and streamer-type patterns—and if you have no success with these underwater patterns, vary the depth. First try the patterns near the surface. If this doesn't work, go deeper. Finally, try the patterns right on the bottom of the stream.

## Patterns

Maybe I've now convinced you that going underwater can produce more trout in the fall. You now ask which patterns seem to be most effective at this time of year. I've already praised the virtues of the Beadhead Pheasant Tail Nymph. I usually carry this pattern in sizes 12 and 16. The smaller size often produces when the larger size doesn't. I often opt for the size 16 beadhead on small streams. Before I begin tying these patterns I add some weight to the shank of the hook. I add 10 wraps of .015 weight to the larger pattern and nine wraps of .010 to the size 16 beadhead. The weight (along with the bead) helps the pattern sink faster.

On those fall days when I see no hatch or no surface activity I often tie on a Green Weenie or as Don Bastian calls it, the Greenie. I frequently use this pattern by itself and fish it near the bottom. On the special project water on Fishing Creek in Columbia County, the Little Mahoning Creek in Indiana County, the Loyalhanna Creek in Westmoreland County, and on Clarks Creek in Dauphin County, I've experienced days when I've seen several trout circle the Green Weenie and finally one takes the pattern. The Green Weenie works especially well on these four Commonwealth waters.



I realize that during the summer the Green Weenie might represent a green inchworm, but what does it copy in the fall? I'll never forget that fall afternoon on the lower Bald Eagle when I got my Green Weenie caught on the leaf of a sycamore tree. When I went over to release the fly from the leaf, I saw a pale-green worm within an inch of my pattern. Maybe, just maybe, trout think it's that worm—or maybe they think it's a caddis larva. In fall try to fish the Green Weenie as deeply as possible.

I often tie the Green Weenie on a size 10 or 12 Mustad 79580 hook. On little streams I use a smaller pattern tied on a Mustad 9672 size 12 or 14 hook.

If you hit some deep, fast water or a stream higher than normal in the fall you might want to try a Beadhead Woolly Bugger. In addition to adding marabou to the tail, I also add about six strips of Flashabou. Bryan Meck first added the Flashabou for smallmouth bass on the Susquehanna River below Harrisburg and told me how effective it proved. I again add some weight to the body of the pattern to help it sink faster. I most often opt for bodies with dark olive or black and a grizzly or black palmered hackle. Fish this pattern in heavy riffles. I most often tie this pattern on a size 8 or 10 Mustad 79580.

Don't overlook old-fashioned patterns like some that copy emerging caddis flies. Just your basic wet fly with no tail, a tan or green body, a dark-brown hackle, and dark-brown wing from a turkey feather makes an effective emerger pattern. Tie these patterns on a Tiemco 2457 hook. Even during a fall hatch of caddis flies you often see little surface activity. If you experience this, then go underwater with your downwing pattern.

I always carry a pattern that imitates a minnow. I've found the Lady Ghost to be one of the finest minnow patterns I've ever used. With its silver body and badger hackle it looks like a minnow.

On many small streams in the state you'll find good tan caddis hatches in the fall. I've seen these size 14 caddis flies on streams across the state well into November. The Tan Caddis, tied in a size 12 or 14, produces well at this time of year. Palmer the tan body with a ginger brown hackle.

Don't forget some of the hatches that linger well into October. In the September issue of the *Angler* we looked at several of these hatches. If you don't see trout working on the surface in the fall when a hatch appears, go underneath with a pattern to copy the emerging nymph. A Little Blue-Winged Olive Nymph or an emerger pattern works well on many October afternoons. If you spot a hatch of this small species and see no risers to the dun, go underwater.

Tie some Isonychia Emergers similar to the Baetis Emerger I just described. These also work well in the fall—especially when a hatch of slate drake appears.

If little blue-winged olive or the slate drake hatches happen to emerge while you're fly fishing, fish your emerger pattern just under the surface. Strikes to these patterns are often violent.

Here's an important point to remember—if a natural drift of your underwater pattern doesn't work in the fall, impart some motion to it. Try it with all your underwater patterns.

More than 10 years ago I conducted an experiment with a green caddis pattern. On many early fall days, especially on some of the state's better limestone streams,


you'll encounter some respectable green caddis hatches in late morning. I used an emerging Green Caddis pattern and fished it on a dead drift for a hundred casts, then twitched the pattern continuously for the next 100 casts. I then made 100 more casts using a dead drift with the same pattern, then 100 more imparting motion to the Green Caddis. After several hours of experimenting I checked the results. I caught more than twice as many trout when I purposely moved the pattern compared to the dead drift.

Often imparting motion to the wet fly, especially one imitating an emerging caddis, produces strikes when a dead drift doesn't.

You say you're a purist and only use flies that float on the surface? You're missing a lot of action then—especially when you

fly fish in the fall. If you have to see that dry fly floating on the surface, use the tandem method with a wet fly attached to the bend of the dry fly hook.

Shorten your leader if you use underwater patterns. I often use a seven-foot leader with a 20-inch piece of 4X tippet. With the new leader on the market today, a 4X tippet gives you four- to six-pound strength.

Do you fly fish in October? Have you always resorted to using dry flies when you fish on these early fall days? Would you like to increase your catch? Go underwater with one of a number of productive patterns. Carry patterns like the Beadhead Woolly Bugger, Green Weenie, Beadhead Pheasant Tail Nymph, a few Lady Ghost streamers, some emerging caddis patterns like the Tan Caddis, and some emerging nymph patterns to copy several hatches you might meet. Don't forget to vary the depth and retrieve. Try fishing wet flies from just under the surface to fishing them on the bottom. It might take an experience similar to the one I had a few years ago to change your fishing methods. But once you've experienced the greater number of trout you catch underwater at this time, you will change your ways. 

**How would you like to increase your success ratio immediately by 500 percent? That's what going underwater in fall did for us, and it can do the same for you!**

## Fall Underwater Fly Patterns

1. Beadhead Pheasant Tail Nymph—sizes 12 to 16 (Tiemco 2457).
2. Beadhead Woolly Bugger—sizes 8 and 10 (Mustad 79580).
3. Green Weenie—sizes 10 and 12 (Mustad 9672 and 79580).
4. Green and Tan Caddises—sizes 14 and 16 (Tiemco 2457).
5. Isonychia Emerger—size 14 (Mustad 3906B).
6. Baetis Emerger—size 18 (Mustad 3906B).
7. Lady Ghost—size 8 or 10 (Mustad 3665 A).



# My Favorite Time for Bass Fishing

by Mike Bleech



*Worth Hammond shows a bass he caught on a diving crankbait.*

A stiff wind had blown from the north all day, churning two-foot whitecaps on the Allegheny Reservoir. Holding a position with the electric motor had been impossible, as had trying to anchor on the steep, shale bottom. Instead of giving up and going back to the computer keyboard, I just let the wind push my boat along the shoreline while I cast deep-diving crankbaits. Three hours of this tactic produced a couple of 12-inch smallmouths.

Then the air became calm, and big snowflakes began lazily falling into the water, the first snow of fall. Because the wind was gone, the air actually felt warmer, almost balmy. Then something wonderful happened to the attitude of the bass. For the remainder of the afternoon my crawfish-colored crankbait was magical. The rocky points where I had fished all summer, where I could have sworn no bass bigger than 12 to 14 inches swam, came alive with 3- and 4-pound bass.

That is fall bass fishing. During fall, after the water temperature drops below the high 50s, bass fishing peaks until the water temperature drops into the 30s. Both smallmouths and largemouths congregate in identifiable places, and they go on one last feeding binge before winter. Better still, gone are the tourist season crowds, the sun worshipers, the water skiers and most anglers.

In our northern counties the fall peak is well underway by early October. It might continue through mid-November to late November. In the southern counties it might start a few weeks later and run through December.

## Smallies on points

One of the first hot patterns to emerge during this fall bass fishing peak, the one I enjoyed in the big snowflakes at the Allegheny Reservoir, is smallmouth bass on points. You can find this pattern at many of our lakes, including Raystown, Wallenpaupack, Youghiogheny, Conowingo and others. Smallmouths that were scattered through the summer begin to gather near steep dropoffs on the edges of points.

I can't say for certain that all the bass are eating in this situation because I have not killed any to examine their stomachs. However, I have seen them regurgitate minnows and shad. And I often see schools of baitfish





*The author used a topwater lure to find this early fall largemouth.*

on the sonar. Probably they are busting schools of baitfish when they are at the top of the breaks, and eating crayfish while they are at the bottom of the breaks. Anyway, this is how I base my lure selections early in the fall season.

### Lure selection

First I try minnow-shaped lures at the tops of the breaks. If smallmouths are close to the surface I might also use surface lures that imitate injured minnows. If they do not respond to topwater or shallow-running lures, a switch to deep-diving crankbaits is in order. Finally I try jump blades or jigs bounced down the dropoffs.

At some of the better hotspots it is possible to catch bass all day by following the smallmouths up and down the dropoffs.

Topwater fishing can produce fast action while the water temperature is in the 50s for both smallmouths and largemouths, though more so, smallmouths. This is a good way to cover water before the bass have really become concentrated in their late fall haunts. Use faster lures and tactics—walking the dog, jerkbaits (stick lures) and buzzbaits. On strange water I often pick a stretch of good-looking shoreline, turn

the electric motor on low speed, and start pitching topwater lures. On familiar water I am more apt to skip from one hotspot to the next.

Sometimes anglers choose lures and fishing methods based on which might be most productive. But if you really like fishing you also make choices based on which is most fun. Topwater fishing often falls into the latter category.

During early fall bass are aggressive, but they are just starting to congregate. By mid-fall, as the water temperature drops through the low 50s and high 40s, the hotspots should be evident by catching several bass at specific locations. Many of the biggest bass in any lake congregate at what are probably the best feeding locations. Some of these spots are easy to recognize. But the best places in heavily fished waters escape the notice of most anglers.

### Points—classic structure

Points are the classic fall bass structure. Just knowing this can get you into good fall bass fishing. But the most obvious points are heavily fished. Try these places on unfamiliar water, but if you have time, look for less obvious points, the ones that are completely underwater. Points need

not be large. The most important factor is that at some place the bottom drops quickly into deep water. This is the common thread of fall bass hotspots, both for largemouths and smallmouths (see Figure 1).

In Figure 1 there are two points, one large and one small. The large point (A) has gentle slopes all around, except at two places, the outer tip, and a projection on the southern side (B). Both of these places are likely hotspots. Most serious bass anglers quickly find the outer tip. Bass that inhabit that area are quickly caught. But the projection is less obvious. That is one place I would expect to find big bass.

Another place where I would expect to find big bass is the smaller point that is not revealed by a point of dry land (C). This point is completely submerged, so only more observant anglers, those who can interpret finer details on sonar, will find it.

### Shelves

Shelves, or benches, can be fall hotspots at steep-walled lakes like Raystown and the Allegheny Reservoir. These are interruptions in otherwise steep bottom slopes (see Figure 2). Some are natural, some are manmade. Landslides sometimes create shelves (A) in manmade lakes.



Sunken road beds (B) are the most common manmade shelves.

Late green weeds are often great mid-fall hotspots. Most aquatic weeds die with the dwindling sunlight of mid-fall. Immediately they are attacked by organisms that consume oxygen, making the water in that immediate vicinity low in oxygen. Green weeds are still producing oxygen, initiating a food chain. They are full of micro-organisms that support the things bass eat.

A patch of weeds that remains green during October might hold all of the bass that were spread over a wide area just weeks before.

I am not enough of a biologist to explain why this is so, but it seems that most patches of late green weeds I have found have been over a bottom that is a mixture of silt, gravel and rocks. Frequently I find a mix of largemouths and smallmouths at these places. Most of the bass are largemouths, but this is a great place for very big smallmouths.

## Creek channels

Dying weeds push largemouth bass out of their summer haunts. One of the places they often seek in our shallower manmade lakes is sunken creek channels.

Certain places in the channels hold bass (see Figure 3), but the only way to find the concentrations of bass is to get over the channel and start fishing. You might discover the reason bass like one place in the channel over all others, but locating bass may be easier than finding the reasons for the bass to be there. For example, stumps on the edge of the channel might be a major attraction to bass, but how do you know that until you catch a bass there? Locating a stump using sonar is easier said than done, especially when it is on the edge of bottom structure.

Once you locate a hotspot, use landmarks to triangulate its location, or better yet, use a GPS or Loran unit.

At Lake Erie those huge smallmouths move closer to shore during fall, onto the same shallow structure where they can be found during spring, mostly before the bass season opens. This is the best time to try for a trophy smallmouth in Pennsylvania.

Most of the bottom in our section of



Lake Erie is shale, flat and featureless. The key smallmouth structures are dropoffs or ledges. The best of these are accompanied by a mix of rocks and gravel (see Figure 4).

Lake Erie has undergone a significant change during the mid-1990s. It has gotten very clear, because of a combination of pollution abatement and filtration by zebra mussels. As a result, smallmouths are not often inclined to move shallower than 15 feet. Most often I have been finding them in the 25-foot to 35-foot depth range.

## Rocky humps

Rocky humps (see Figure 5) are likely to be fall smallmouth bass hotspots in rivers or lakes, as long as some part of the rock hump breaks into relatively deep water (A). A few of my Allegheny River hotspots are these kinds of places.

With the exception of the late green weeds, all of these fall hotspots have steep depth breaks in common. I would never suggest that all fall bass hotspots have a steep slope because I have not found every fall bass hotspot, though I sure have tried. Nonetheless, it is the steep break that I seek. If there is a lot of steep break I look for something on the steep break to hold bass, such as wood, rocks, irregularities in the break, patches of rock on generally soft bottom, green weeds, or anything else that looks different.

As bass congregate at the hotspots during mid-fall, they become less aggressive. Finding them can be difficult, if you did not already locate them during early fall. But once you find them you can often catch a lot of big bass. Even though their metabolism is slowed in the cold water, they will take a meal if you present it slowly and close. My favorite lures are jigs, jump blades fished vertically, and live minnows. A jig-and-minnow combination is excellent.

Mid-fall is an inspiring time to be in

the outdoors. Flaming foliage rims our lakes with shades of red, gold, yellow and green. The sky gets bluer than at any other time, and clouds are whiter. Most years we get a brief reprieve from dropping temperatures called Indian summer, when the sun shines and breezes are gentle. Bass respond about as people do, trying to cram as much activity as possible into this last nice weather before the impending winter. If you do not go fishing during Indian summer

I suggest that you re-evaluate your priorities. This is what makes life so wonderful.

The next cold, fall blast pushes us into late fall, when leaves turn brown and are battered to the ground by cold northwest winds. Still the fall bass peak is not finished, though. As the water temperature falls through the low 40s, bass congregate in choice locations, still eager to grab an easy meal. In fact, this is the very best time I know to catch trophy bass. It might just last a few days in northern Pennsylvania, but it might go on for weeks in the southern fringe of the state.

Mark your location carefully when you catch that first big bass, because almost certainly there are more in the immediate vicinity. Precise bait presentation is vitally important. All of the bass in a hotspot might be in a 10-foot circle, and getting a bait outside that circle might be useless. I doubt if a bass will move more than a couple of feet to take a bait, then only if it is not moving. It is one of very few occasions when I think still-fishing is the best approach to bass fishing. But this takes confidence that the bait is in a good place.

How long do you wait? This depends in part on how confident you are that the bait is in the right place. Reasoning that not every bass is in a feeding mood, and that the bait might have to be within inches of a bass's mouth, I usually move the bait a few feet every five minutes or so.

If you are serious about catching big bass, use big bait. My favorites are stonerollers or common shiners about 6 inches in length. I believe it takes a mouthful to tempt big bass into expending precious energy. Lightly lip-hook the bait so it remains lively. Use just enough weight to keep it close to the bottom. A small to medium-size splitshot is plenty in any case I have experienced.



# My Favorite Time for Bass Fishing

I have often pondered why big bass are so much more common during late fall than at any time other than pre-spawn (when our bass season is closed). They feed much more aggressively during summer, yet it is rare to catch big bass, especially big smallmouths. The only explanation that makes sense to me is that natural food is much more scarce during late fall than during summer.

## Bass conservation

Because so many big bass, the biggest bass in the system and the major spawn-

ers, are concentrated in tight locations, they are very vulnerable. A few greedy anglers could seriously deplete the population of big bass in any lake. I have seen it happen.

Fishing regulations are just the minimum guidelines for sportsmanship. Keeping a bass for the wall doesn't hurt a thing, nor does keeping a bass that is mortally hooked. But keeping a limit of 5-pound bass, in

my opinion, is not in anyone's best interests. They will never get to be 6-pound bass if you eat them. If you develop the skills to catch big bass during fall, you are a good enough angler to catch plenty of smaller bass, or other less vulnerable species to keep plenty of fish on the dinner table.

ANGLER

## Fishing the Fall Bass Peak in a Nutshell

In early fall, bass are still somewhat scattered, just beginning to move toward steep structures. The water temperature is about 59 to 50 degrees.

Use faster methods that cover a lot of water, including topwater lures, crankbaits, jigs or jump blades in deeper water.

In mid-fall, bass are mostly close to steep structures, often moving up structure into shallow water. The water temperature is 53 to 45 degrees.

Use slower methods, concentrating on hotspots. These lures include jigs, or jig and minnow, jump blades, and live minnows.

In late fall, bass congregate at steep structures, larger bass seldom moving shallower than about 8 feet, deeper in very clear water. The water temperature is 46 to 39 degrees, somewhat colder for largemouth bass.

Use very slow presentations, including live minnows, still fished or retrieved very slowly, and vertical jigs.—MB.

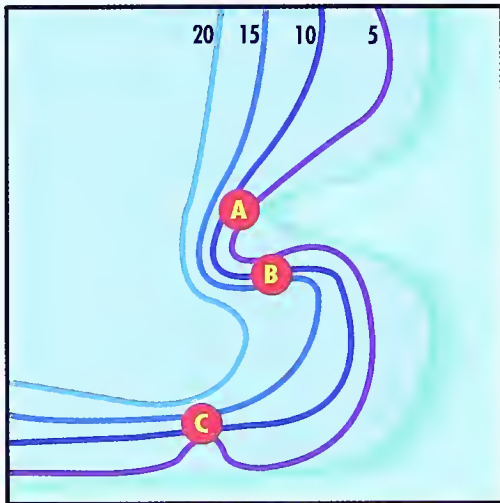


Figure 1.

Here are two points, one large (A & B) and one not revealed by dry land (C). The large point has gentle slopes all around, except at two places, the outer tip, and a projection on the southern side (B). Both of these places are likely hotspots. Another place to find big bass is the smaller point (C). This point is completely submerged, so only more observant anglers, those who can interpret finer details on sonar, will find it.

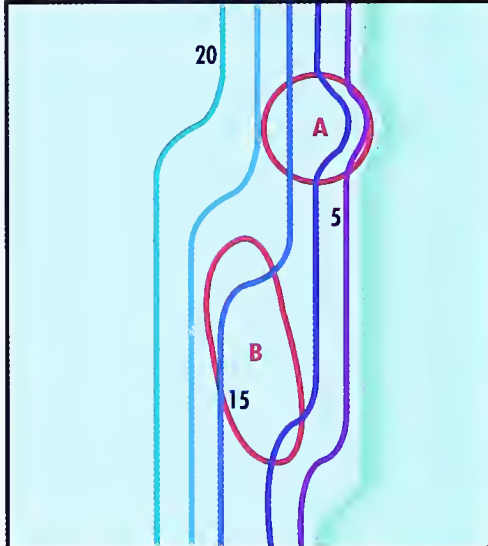


Figure 2.

Shelves, or benches, can be fall hotspots at steep-walled lakes like Raystown and the Allegheny Reservoir. These are interruptions in otherwise steep bottom slopes. Some are natural, some are manmade. Landslides sometimes create shelves (A) in manmade lakes. Sunken road beds (B) are the most common manmade shelves.

Figure 3.

Certain places in channels hold bass, but the only way to find the concentrations of bass is to get over the channel and start fishing. You might discover the reason bass like one place in the channel over all others, but locating bass may be easier than finding the reasons for the bass to be there. For example, stumps on the edge of the channel might be a major attraction to bass. Locating a stump using sonar is easier said than done, especially when it is on the edge of bottom structure.

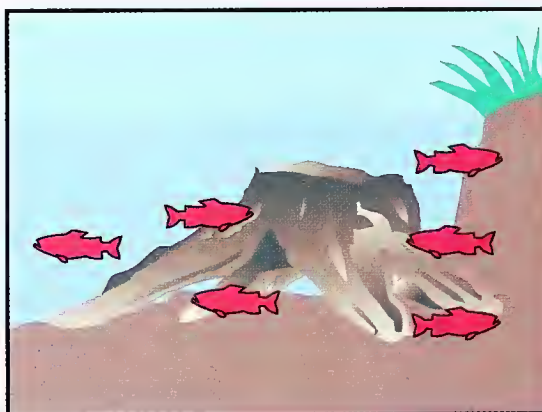


Figure 4.

Most of the bottom in our section of Lake Erie is shale, flat and featureless. The key smallmouth structures are dropoffs or ledges. The best of these are accompanied by a mix of rocks and gravel.



Figure 5.

In rivers and lakes, rocky humps are likely to be fall smallmouth bass hotspots, as long as some part of the rocky hump breaks into relatively deep water (A). A few of my Allegheny River hotspots are these kinds of places.



# Thank You, Mr. Norris!

by Carl Richardson

*When a survey of the waters of the state is made, and in every river and lake having hard rocky bottoms are found black bass, sometimes to the practical exclusion of other species of large fishes, it seems almost incredible that a little more than thirty-three years ago, not a specimen of this member of the perch tribe was to be found therein. Yet this as far as known, is absolutely correct. For the introduction of this magnificent game and table fish the people are indebted to the genial and enthusiastic angler, Thad Norris...*

—Report of the Pennsylvania Fish Commissioners, 1895

If you fish for smallmouth bass anywhere in the Susquehanna or Delaware basins, you owe Thad Norris, his crew and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission a big thank-you. Some 125 years ago this month, Mr. Norris and an enterprising group of anglers introduced smallmouth bass to these waters. Despite the glove-like fit between the smallmouth and the Susquehanna and Delaware rivers, they aren't native to those waters. In Pennsylvania before 1870, smallmouth bass were found only in the Ohio River and its tributaries, and in Lake Erie. In the northeast the native range of the smallmouth includes the Mississippi River Basin, the Great Lakes and possibly the St. Lawrence.





# Thank You, Mr. Morris!

Even though the history of Pennsylvania and its natural resources are well-documented, the early events in the Commission's history are recorded in sketchy detail. The Commission then had little or no budget. The only records kept focused on hatchery production. There was some information contained in Commission of Fisheries reports from the late 1800s. Most of the information on the introduction came from the Commission of Fisheries reports from 1873, 1879, 1880, 1889 and 1895. By far the best account of the introduction was in the 1895 report in a discussion on the history of smallmouth bass, although many details are missing.

## Early history of Pennsylvania

Some 10,000 to 20,000 years ago, advances and retreats in glaciers in what is now Pennsylvania altered river flows and connected and disconnected historic drainages. The connections afforded dispersal routes for various fishes. The "disconnections" blocked dispersal. These events are believed to have defined the natural distributions of fish species in Pennsylvania. This early natural distribution left the Susquehanna and Delaware River drainages without smallmouth bass.

## Early settlement

About the year 1500, mature 200- to 300-year-old white pine trees, some as large as four feet in diameter, lined the steep river valleys and covered the Appalachian Mountains. Large hemlock trees also dotted the forest. The canopy formed by these large conifers was so dense that little sunlight reached the forest floor. So dense were the forests that naturalist John Bartram wrote later in 1734, "...it seems almost as if the sun had never shown on the ground since the creation."

The waters flowing through these forests were shaded from the warming of the sun, keeping them cool year-round and creating prime brook trout habitat. Brook trout, some as large as six pounds, as the story goes, swam in most of the waters that drained the state. Herring, American shad and striped bass freely migrated in large numbers up the main stem and tributaries of the Delaware and Susquehanna rivers.

First word of the abundant natural resources here reached London in 1624, with John Smith's accounts of his trip up the Susquehanna. Europe had long depleted its forests and was in need of valuable timber. Early settlements in New England and Virginia had been the source of that timber for nearly 25 years, so the land chartered to Penn was appealing both to the Crown and to others seeking their fortunes. At the time of Penn's arrival in 1682, an estimated 700 billion board feet of timber stood, covering 99.8 percent of the state. Today that amount of wood would build some 63 million homes, about two-thirds of the number of houses currently in the U.S.

In the late 1600s and into the 1700s, lumbering was a part-time business for farmers during the winter months, cutting stands near water. They cut the trees and waited for spring's high water to carry them away. During the growing season the land they cleared was then planted, and often produced bumper crops of grain.

When shipbuilding became big business in Philadelphia and Baltimore the lumber was floated down the rivers in large rafts. This timber built more ships which carried resources back to Europe and returned with even more immigrants lured by the resources of the New World.

In the mid-1800s, large timber companies that had been cutting in New York and throughout New England in the 1830s and 1840s were lured to Penns Woods. They brought with them the timber industry. They used cheap labor, establishing camps and moving on when the trees had been cut. The trees closest to water were the first to go. Then, the operation moved deeper into the woods, hauling trees to water by horse or mule teams. The logs were then floated downstream to mills along the lower Susquehanna and Delaware rivers.

The opening of the canal system and later the railroad put this industry into overdrive. These new forms of transportation allowed the trees to be milled before shipping. Now the finished product could travel by canal boat or rail car. When forests were depleted, the companies moved on.

Pennsylvania's natural resources fed the growing appetite of this new world for more than a century. However, most of the lumbering that took place in the late 1800s left land barren and hillsides unprotected from spring floods. Brook trout populations suffered because the trees that once provided shade and kept waters cool also kept hillsides stable. The eroding soils covered the bottom gravel so important to spawning brook trout and other fish. Eventually they could be found only in the refuges left by boundary disputes or terrain too rugged to be timbered. The spoils

## Smallmouth Bass Stocking Records 1873

river	fish stocked	river	fish stocked
<b>Lehigh River</b>		<b>Juniata and Its Branches</b>	
Chain Dam	115	Holidaysburg	25
Hope's Lock	26	Williamsburg Dam	40
Bethlehem	55	Water Street Dam	50
Allentown	27	Petersburg	40
Coplay	54	Dam above Huntingdon	50
Laurys	64	McVeytown	50
Lehigh Gap	37	Lewistown	50
Parryville	25	Mifflin	65
Turnhole	66	Three Mile Level (six miles east of Holidaysburg)	50
White Haven	57	<b>Total in Juniata</b>	<b>420</b>
<b>Total Lehigh</b>	<b>526</b>		
<b>North Branch of Susquehanna</b>		<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
Wilkes Barre	75	Reservoir near Holidaysburg	110
Meshoppen	75	Yellow Breeches Creek	50
Towanda	75	Pequa Creek	75
Catawissa	75	Chique Salunga Creek (Mt. Joy)	75
Danville	75	Octoraro Creek	75
<b>Total North Branch</b>	<b>375</b>	Pequa Creek (at Gordonsville)	50
<b>West Branch of Susquehanna</b>		Codorus Creek	75
Williamsport	63	<b>Total</b>	<b>510</b>
Sunbury	50		
Halifax	50		
Lock Haven	50		
<b>Total West Branch</b>	<b>213</b>		



# Thank You, Mr. Norris!

of timbering, masses of unusable limbs, and the plants that appeared later were fodder for fires. Forest fires ravaged much of Pennsylvania during this time and into the mid-1900s.

At about the same time, Pennsylvania's coal reserves were being exploited at the same rate. Coal dust covered everything, and was washed into the water. So did the acids, formed when air and water contact the layers of rock surrounding coal seams. The acid mine drainage from these long abandoned mines remains a problem even today, some 150 years later.

Raw sewage and other industrial pollution fouled our large rivers. This abuse caused once abundant numbers of migratory fishes to decline. Construction of mill dams, canal dams and later, hydroelectric dams also interfered with this annual migration.

In addition to the destruction of habitat, there was overfishing. Commercial fishing was big business in Pennsylvania in the 1700s and 1800s, and there were no fishing regulations. Only the rich and well-to-do fished for sport. Pennsylvania fish supported the armies of two wars. Both Colonial troops and Union and Confederate forces ate American shad and other fish from Pennsylvania waters.

## Post Civil War

The Civil War called many of those timbering and mining people to service, so activity declined. After the war and through the period of Reconstruction, concern for the years of abuse on Pennsylvania's natural resources grew. In 1866, the Pennsylvania Commission of Fisheries was formed, with the restoration of migratory fish to the Susquehanna River as its mission. This Commission of Fisheries later became the Pennsylvania Fish Commission.

Fishermen of this era longed for the good old days when brook trout were abundant, and shad and stripers migrated in large numbers each spring. This longing led to stricter fishing regulations and later anti-pollution laws. Anglers were ardent conservationists then, as they are today.

At that time, fisheries as a science was in its infancy. Most of the early restoration efforts focused on stocking hatchery-raised fish, or fish transplanted from other waters. As Del Graff, Director of the Commission Bureau of Fisheries, puts it, "In the old days they just threw fish in anywhere and waited to see what happened." Early attempts using this approach with brook trout and American shad proved unsuccessful in many cases.

## Enter Thad Norris

Thad Norris, a well-known angler from southeastern Pennsylvania, authored a book titled *The American Angler*. From his home in southeastern Pennsylvania he traveled and fished often, calling the Tobyhanna his home water. He, along with other anglers, was concerned with Pennsylvania's depleted fisheries.

His travels took him to the Potomac River, where he first caught smallmouth bass. At that time, the smallmouth bass, thought to be a member of the perch family, was known by many names. *Small-mouthed black bass* was commonly used then, but names like *growler*, *trout perch*, *jumper*, *yellow bass* and *bronze backer* were also used by anglers. Bi-

ologists of the time called it by its scientific name, "Grystes Salmoides." Regardless of what it was called, even then anglers raved about what sport this fish provided.

Commercial and sport fishing on the Potomac for smallmouth bass was big business at the time of his visit. Apparently tangling with a smallmouth wasn't much different then, because in his book, he writes of its voracious appetite and tail-walking fights. He also recognized that the habitat on the Potomac was similar to that of many waters in his home state.

Whether Thad knew it or not is unknown, but ironically, smallmouth bass aren't native to the Potomac, either. The origins of these fish are identified in the Pennsylvania Commission of Fisheries 1873 Report: *Fifteen of these fish, carried west in the tank of a locomotive on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, sixteen years ago, and deposited in the Potomac River near Harper's Ferry, has made them so abundant in that stream, that it to-day supplies the markets of our chief cities with this excellent fish.*

The Commission of Fisheries approved Thad's idea to transplant fish, but required that he raise the funds to carry out the job. This was not unusual then, because the Commission regularly depended on anglers to complete their mission. Norris, along with Howard J. Reeder and G.W. Stoudt, solicited other anglers in Easton and Philadelphia. The three of them raised a total of \$1,313, with most of the money coming from Philadelphia anglers. With half of the money in hand, the group purchased 450 smallmouth bass at Harper's Ferry.

The fish were transported in 15-gallon milk cans, with 25 to 50 fish in each can. The loaded cans were then most likely transported to Easton by railroad. The men who accompanied the fish replenished oxygen in the water by dipping water out of the cans and pouring it back into the cans. This batch of fish was deposited into the Delaware River on October 26, 1870, just below the Lehigh Dam at Easton.

Details of the introduction of smallmouth to the Susquehanna are not as well-detailed, at least according to the Commission of Fisheries reports. The report for 1895 describes the Susquehanna introduction as follows: *Shortly afterwards [introduction to the Delaware] a number of public spirited citizens residing along the Susquehanna and Schuylkill Rivers, purchased a number of fish from the same locality on the Potomac, paying therefore one dollar each, and planted them in those two streams.*

When exactly "shortly afterwards" was is not clear, but events in 1873 later clarified the timing of introduction to the Susquehanna.

## The result

By 1873 anglers fishing the Delaware, Schuylkill and Susquehanna rivers were catching 4-pound and 5-pound smallmouth bass! The numbers and waters stocked are shown on page 12. In just three years, these fish adapted to their new homes and successfully reproduced. This early success led some of the day to declare that this new fish was more sporting than their beloved "speckled trout." In that same year the Commission collected 2,044 smallmouth bass and stocked them in tributaries of the Dela-



# Thank You, Mr. Norris!

ware and Susquehanna. Most of these fish came from the Delaware River near Easton. A few came from the Juniata near Newport.

That fish were taken from the Juniata in 1873 leads us to believe that the Susquehanna was stocked about the same time as the Delaware or immediately thereafter. As was the norm then, the fish were loaded into milk cans and loaded on railroad cars.

The demand from anglers wanting smallmouth bass that year caused the Commission to announce that it would provide a limited number to each applicant and only if the applicant paid the shipping charges. In 1874, the Commission stocked slightly fewer than 2,000 smallmouth bass, these fish going into several small streams and a few lakes.

The western part of the state was not overlooked in the early stocking efforts. The Commissioners noted that the waters of the west were so polluted from mining and the oil industry that they were unfit for stocking. Little did they know, but these rivers would come back to provide some of the state's best smallmouth bass fishing.

In the first 10 years, the stocking program was termed a big success. But a few critics cautioned that this fish was taking too well to its new home. Many cautioned that it would take over and displace other important fishes, like walleyes and brook trout. Some commercial anglers saw a decline in walleye catches and blamed smallmouth bass, because they believed the bass ate walleye eggs. Others thought the catches were good and even improving, because smallmouth bass fed on the smaller fish that preyed on walleye eggs and young.

The idea that the introduction of smallmouth bass was a success was debated through the end of the 1800s and into the early 1900s.

The stocking program with transplanted fish continued until 1914. In that year the Commission announced that after years of research it was successful in producing smallmouth bass in a hatchery setting. The breakthrough occurred when the Commission discovered that it was best to let the adult fish spawn and collect the young fry. The young fry, once collected and moved to other ponds, were fed a diet of daphnia or water fleas. As they grew, the fish were fed ground or dried fish until the smallmouths

reached fingerling stage. Through the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the Commission was involved in large-scale production of smallmouth bass in its warmwater hatcheries.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, less dependence was placed on hatchery fish, especially where waters supported self-sustaining populations. The use of conservative size and creel limits enhanced fishing opportunities.

Now stocking takes place only on new impoundments or where old impoundments are reclaimed. Smallmouth bass fisheries throughout the Commonwealth today are managed to be entirely self-sustaining.


You don't have to look far today to find those who would say the 1870 introduction of smallmouth bass was a raging success. According to Commission statistics for 1991, anglers made more than 800,000 trips for smallmouth bass to the waters where they were introduced. The rivers in the native range of smallmouth bass receive about 400,000 angler trips each year. Many of Thad Norris' time were excited about the economic benefit of the introduction. What do you think they would say about today's estimate of \$22 million in economic benefit from the 1991 trips?

## Smallmouth bass into the 21st century

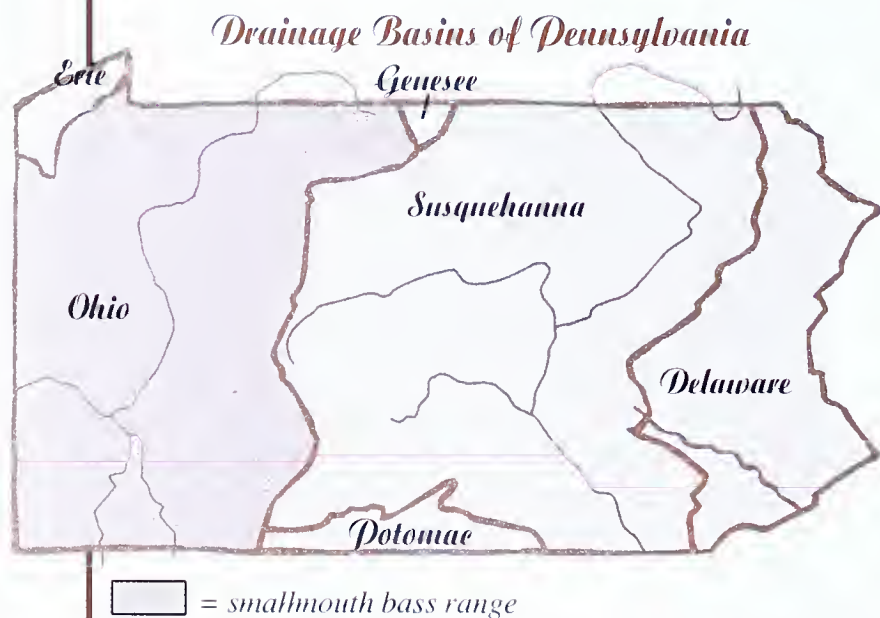
Smallmouth bass anglers have a lot to look forward to as we near the end of this century. By establishing the 15-inch minimum size limit on segments of the Susquehanna, Juniata and Allegheny rivers, we are working to make three great waters even better. As Graff puts it, "We are working to make the boom and bust years that often occur with river populations less significant to angler catches. By protecting more and more fish from harvest, anglers have a better chance of tying into a quality fish."

The "experimental" catch-and-release section on Dunkard Creek in Greene County offers some exciting prospects, too. The evaluation of these and other programs continues, and will help guide future regulations. "Now," Graff says, "we have to come to terms with the spring closed season." Many inside and outside the Commission have been looking long and hard at this issue, which should be resolved soon.

Another bright spot is improving habitat. We are seeing the results of the Clean Water Act with improved water quality on our large rivers. This is true particularly in the smallmouth bass native range here in Pennsylvania. On the Three Rivers improved water quality is allowing bass numbers to increase. Lake Erie, once declared "dead," has received national acclaim as a trophy smallmouth bass water. Even the Allegheny and its smaller tributaries, once fouled by acid mine drainage, are receiving lots of attention in the pages of magazines.

The next time I'm waist-deep in the Susquehanna, Juniata or Allegheny rivers and a smallmouth smacks the day-lights out of my lure and makes splashing, wild attempts to throw it, you can count on one thing: I'll be thanking Thad Norris and our early fish commissioners. 

For help with this article the author thanks Del Graff, Rick Hoopes, Bob Lorantas, Tom Bender and the staff at the Commission's Benner Spring Research Station Library.





# STEELHEAD BONANZA

*by Mike Simmons*

You know, Mike, the fishing is almost too good this year. Jimmy Dallas grinned at me from his position at few yards downstream at the edge of a long, shallow hole on Walnut Creek. His line was taut and slicing through the water as he leaned back, grasping his fly rod high on the handle with both hands and bracing the butt against his forearm to provide additional leverage.







*As far as terminal tackle is concerned, the favorites of stream steelheaders have always been egg sacs fished 12 to 14 inches below sinkers of sufficient weight to bounce off the bottom (usually one or two splitshot). These dime-sized bunches of salmon or trout eggs clustered in mesh netting have probably accounted for more fish caught from the tributaries than all other lures combined.*

I quickly retrieved my own line to watch Dallas play yet another five-pound steelhead that had fallen for his egg-sac marshmallow bait. The fish made long runs upstream, only to reverse itself and dash northward toward Lake Erie. It was important that Dallas turn the fish before it reached the swift riffle at the tail of the hole or he would be forced either to break his line or follow the surging trout downstream while executing a clever dance over the slippery slate bottom and shoreline.

At our ages, such pirouettes and moon-walking on slippery surfaces are things to be avoided, and Dallas, after a lifetime of catching steelhead, is very good at what he does. After five minutes or so, Jim led the tired fish to shallow water and gently released the hook. He held the trout upright in the water for a few moments while it regained its composure. Then, without fanfare, the big steelhead slowly swam back toward the swifter current.

I knew what Dallas meant about the fishing being almost too good. We had been catching and releasing steelhead ranging from four to six pounds all day, and many local hardcore veteran steelheaders had been regularly hooking 20 to 30 trout

per outing (on good days) for several weeks. The sport had become almost routine. It was early November 1993, and each time autumn rains had raised water levels in the Lake Erie tributaries, thousands of the big trout had migrated upstream from the main lake in false spawning runs. Subsequently, for each day or two following such rains and swollen streams, the fishing had been nothing short of spectacular.

Actually, steelhead fishing has been good along the Lake Erie tributaries for many years, dating back to those pioneering days, over 25 years ago, when 3-C-U, the local Fish and Boat Commission cooperative nursery, first began hatching, raising and releasing rainbow trout into the tributaries—not for put-and-take fishing, but instead so that they might migrate downstream into Lake Erie and grow to maturity before returning to the streams to spawn as adult, trophy fish. The idea was to provide a unique fishing opportunity for Pennsylvania anglers, a chance to catch strong, colorful, wild trout measured in pounds instead of inches.

Over the years, the number of steelhead stocked annually, both by 3-C-U and the Fish and Boat Commission, has risen significantly. During the boom years for its Lake Erie coho salmon program, the Commission attempted to stock approximately one million cohos annually, while continuing to raise and release up to a half-million steelhead. However, when salmon returns dwindled in more recent years, the Commission reversed those priorities and now tries to release a million steelhead each year. Add those fish to the continued production of approximately 115,000 3-C-U steelhead, annually, and the source of all those migrating fish coursing up October waters becomes obvious.

#### **Four-season event**

Steelhead fishing in Erie County is a four-season event. The trout can be caught throughout the winter from streams, as long as water remains open, and through the ice in Presque Isle Bay after freeze-up. Serious spring steelheading begins as soon as ice clears

from the tributaries. Because March is sometimes one of the better months to catch steelhead (weather permitting), the Fish and Boat Commission allows the tributaries to remain open to trout fishing until April 1, even though four of those waters, Crooked Creek, Elk Creek, Cascade Creek and Twenty Mile, are on the official list of approved trout waters that normally close to fishing at the end of February.

Summer steelhead are in the deeper waters of Lake Erie, where they do not school but instead range over large portions of the Central and Eastern basins. Because they are not schooled, most steelhead caught in summer are bonus fish taken by anglers trolling for walleyes, salmon or other deep-water species. Relatively few fishermen specifically target summer steelhead. However, because of increased trout numbers, those bonus days are becoming much more frequent for deep-water trollers.

But of all seasons, autumn is when steelhead fishing becomes the hottest show in town along the Erie lakeshore. Although the trout do not truly spawn until spring, they begin gathering near the mouths of the tributaries as early as September when lower air temperatures cool the water. Then, when conditions



are right, steelhead make false runs upstream—sometimes returning to the lake, other times remaining in big holes for many days. These runs peak in November, signaling the annual steelhead bonanza.

## Tackle, technique

Catching a steelhead is not particularly difficult, but it does require some specialized tackle and technique. An inland trout angler will be more than a little surprised at the response at the end of his line the first time he sets a hook into a six-pound Lake Erie steelhead. Without the right tackle and a little understanding of the rules of the game, the experience will be a short one.

Every fall, many steelhead anglers spend countless hours along beaches where the major tributaries enter Lake Erie, casting lures or egg sacs into the surf. Certainly one of the most popular shore locations is the mouth of Trout Run. Just west of the Walnut Creek Access and north of the community of Avonia, Trout Run is classified by the Fish and Boat Commission as a nursery water. This means that no fishing of any type is allowed in the stream itself. However, fishing is permitted in the lake at the mouth. When surf and wind conditions permit, it is an ideal place to try for steelhead for those who like big-water fishing.

Because trout have congregated at such locations, success is often high even for novice anglers. Any spinning rod works for this type of steelheading, but casting distance is important. One special type of spinning rod, the noodle, has become popular with some shoreline anglers because of its ability to cast tender egg sacs far into the lake without dislodging the bait from the hook. Noodle rods allow the use of very light line (four-pound test is a good choice), again increasing casting distance. Noodles also cast light spinners fairly well, although for hardware I prefer a stiffer rod.

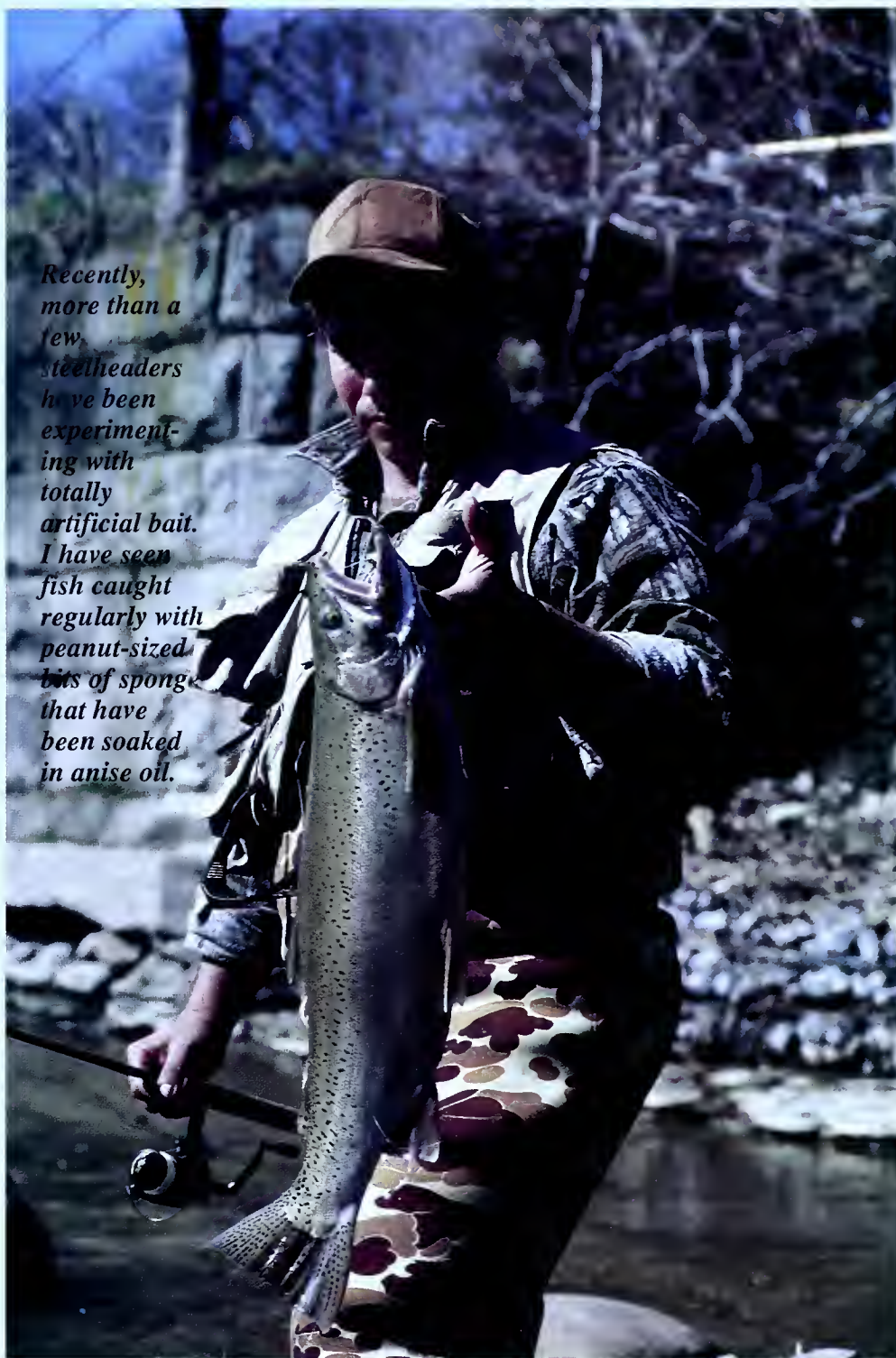
The mouth of Trout Run always draws a crowd of fishermen, but I suspect that more steelhead anglers try their sport on the tributaries themselves than at any other location. The streams offer more room for anglers to spread themselves, migrating fish are frequently visible in the water, and more techniques may be used to lure the fish to the hook.

Although steelhead migrate up virtually every available tributary along the Pennsylvania lakeshore, regardless of the size of the stream, most fishermen spend their time on the larger and more publicly accessible waterways. All of the tributaries run through private land, with only a few points of public access available on some of them. This makes it imperative that anglers trespass only where fishing is permitted and that they be particularly attentive to the rights of the property owners.

## Best streams

West of the city of Erie, the best steelhead streams are Crooked Creek, Elk Creek (the largest tributary in the county) and Walnut Creek. East of Erie, Twenty Mile probably draws the largest number of anglers, but Twelve and Sixteen Mile creeks also offer good fishing where public access is permitted. It is important to note that steelhead migrate considerable distances

*Recently, more than a few steelheaders have been experimenting with totally artificial bait. I have seen fish caught regularly with peanut-sized bits of sponge that have been soaked in anise oil.*



upstream. Even though those portions of the tributaries from Route 5 (which runs parallel to the lakeshore) north to the lake draw the greatest numbers of anglers, many fish can be found in the larger holes between Route 5 and Route 20, farther south. Actually, some very nice fishing can be enjoyed even farther south on larger streams such as Elk Creek and Twenty Mile.

## Tackle

Tackle for stream anglers has also been modified a bit by veteran steelheaders over the years. Although noodle rods work well along the shoreline, they are seldom used upstream. I remember well the first time I decided to try a noodle for stream fishing. I was convinced that the 14-foot rod would be the ultimate secret weapon to catch trout on Walnut Creek. I would be able to reach most fish without casting, and the ensuing struggle between man and fish would be an adventure.

It took only a few minutes for me to realize that 14-foot rods grasped by a hand at one far end provide a fulcrum designed to cramp wrists in quick order. A noodle rod resting in a pole



# STEELHEAD BONANZA

holder is far different from one dangling from the hand. Even worse, when a steelhead did take my offering, I learned that 4-pound-test line in swift water is no line at all, especially with a rod so limber that, bent double, it appeared of no consequence to my trout, which was easily making his way through a riffle and back to the lake.

Many stream steelheaders use a long spinning rod with a fairly stiff action, and spool their reels with line ranging from 8- to 12-pound test. Line strength is important for obvious reasons, but line diameter is also critical to getting strikes. Line that is too heavy does not float bait as well and appears to frighten many fish. Lighter line produces more strikes but can result in increased breakoffs. Finding some balance between the two is a matter of trial and error for the individual angler.

I do not like spinning rods for stream steelheading. Despite their large size, steelhead are notorious for hitting very lightly. When fishing egg sacs or other sinking attractors, distinguishing the difference between a splitshot bumping the bottom and the mouthing of a trout is crucial to catching fish, and I simply cannot do it effectively with a spinning rod.

I believe that Jimmy Dallas can catch steelhead with any equipment. However, he introduced me to a technique he uses with great success on the tributaries. He often fishes with a fly rod and a spinning reel spooled with monofilament line. This allows for a more sensitive feel at the rod tip, while providing all of the advantages of invisible line (lots of it) and a functional drag.

A spinning reel attached to the butt of a fly rod feels a bit awkward at first, but familiarity comes quickly. I spool my reel with 10-pound test, and hold the line with my left hand much in the manner of standard fly fishing. Strikes are more easily felt and once hooked the fish can be played as you would on any spinning rod.

## Egg sacs

As far as terminal tackle is concerned, the favorites of stream steelheaders have always been egg sacs fished 12 to 14 inches below sinkers of sufficient weight to bounce off the bottom (usually one or two splitshot). These dime-sized bunches of salmon or trout eggs clustered in mesh netting have probably accounted for more fish caught from the tributaries than all other lures combined.

Over the years, certain refinements have come to the egg sac. Some anglers insert one marshmallow bit into the sac with the eggs, thereby forcing the bait to elevate a bit over the bottom rather than rolling along the bottom. Other fishermen have experimented with the color of the netting and have found that color can indeed make a difference on some days.

Recently, more than a few steelheaders have been experimenting with totally artificial bait. I have seen fish caught regularly with peanut-sized bits of sponge that have been soaked in anise oil.

Small balls of cotton saturated with other secret formulas also work well. And then there are the fly purists. Traditional fly fishing for steelhead has not really caught on along the Erie lakeshore. For one thing, hatches are not common on the tributaries during November and other times when the fish are present in great numbers. Some fly anglers do use streamers from time to time with fair success. However, the up-and-coming fly for stream steelhead in Pennsylvania appears to be the Globug, a round puff of yarn that closely resembles a salmon egg. They can be tied, even with colorful eyes, and fished in the same manner as egg sacs. They work extremely well, and I suppose that their Globug name gives them respectability for entomologically oriented anglers.

Tackle, technique and proper location are undoubtedly major factors for successful steelheading on the Erie tributaries. However, all of them rank second to timing. Unfortunately, timing is a factor not easily controlled. One of the major advantages enjoyed by those of us who live along the lakeshore is the opportunity to do our fishing when the time is right.

There are days, even at the peak of the steelhead bonanza, when fish are uncooperative or not even in the streams. Then, within hours, conditions can change so radically that steelhead can be caught on sac netting that has been stripped of its eggs (this is no exaggeration). Just as often, on the morning following a dream day, fish will have turned off completely in the very holes where they were in a frenzy only hours before.

Each year, I receive calls from friends downstate inquiring when a good time would be to come to Erie for some steelheading. The answer is not easy. General patterns dictate that the best times to fish are after a rain has raised stream levels and discolored the water a bit. However, heavy autumn rains can quickly raise water to unfishable levels for a day or so. Still, it is better to be in Erie when water is plentiful than when streams are low and clear. Trout seldom run under low-water conditions, and those that do are very wary and tight-mouthed. Besides, if streams are temporarily too swollen, there are always those trout waiting in the lake at the mouth of Trout Run and other tributaries.

The Lake Erie steelhead fishery has to be one of the great success stories for Pennsylvania angling. Trout weighing four to six pounds are common. Ten-pounders are not unusual, and the current state record for steelhead stands at over 15 pounds. Jimmy Dallas has a piece of tape wrapped around his rod precisely thirty inches up from the butt. That is his keeper mark for steelhead. Anything smaller is released unless someone has given him a special order for dinner.

Is it any wonder that he thinks the fishing might be getting too good?





# The Sluice Way Trout

by Sam Gladding

Did you ever notice how many times you may have walked by or stood and looked at a particular spot on a stream and suddenly realized that you hadn't really looked at it at all? Such was the case for me at the old mill dam, one fine Saturday morning in July 1937.

A really beautiful old place, a century or more ago it had fed water power to a local mill that ground grain from the farms in the area. I had often looked at the old raceway, now badly fallen in and little more than a swamp.

The dam itself was still functional. It had a breast of about 10 feet of hand-laid stone and a badly worn top of concrete. The total distance across was about 50 feet. Near the one end and about 15 feet from shore was an old iron sluice. This had been built in at the time the dam was constructed. It measured about three feet wide, five feet high, and was about 12 feet long. One could wade out on the top of the dam most any time, because the water was usually about three inches deep. On the upstream side and from the top you could look down through about two feet of water and see the top of the sluice. The badly rusted old mechanism for raising and lowering the gate was also visible. It had rusted shut in the closed position many decades ago.

I was working a wet fly through the pockets along the shore just above the dam. These spots were shaded by the willows that grew out over the water and they were quite deep. One would lose a good many fish there in the root tangles, but those you were lucky enough to net were usually good fish. I had managed to keep two about 14 inches, of good color with the promise of excellent eating. When I pushed out through the willows and found myself at the edge of the dam, I stood there and enjoyed the beauty for a few minutes. The sound of the water going quietly over the dam was a symphony unmatched.

Making my way down along the bank to a position just below the dam, I suddenly realized that I was looking into the sluice. A tree limb floated up on top of the dam since I had been there before and part of it had gone over the lip. This stopped the flow of water at that point and put a hole in the curtain of water as it flowed over the edge. It was through this rent in the curtain that I now could look into the sluice. Standing about two feet in front of this, I could barely

see the water spewing through the badly fitting gate. It made a regular froth on the water for about the first half of its length. It was roughly about two feet deep and very dark. You just couldn't see into that water at all.

As I stood there looking and musing about this, I suddenly found myself wondering if any fish might just be living in there. Taking off the nymph, I quickly tied on a large amber spider tied on a short-shank size 10 hook. I pulled in line until about three feet of leader remained with the fly attached. Looping two large loops in my left hand, I slowly pushed the rod tip through the opening. I knew full well that if I hit anything in there it would be the devil's pay to work him out. Nevertheless, in went the rod and I dapped the spider on the water.

I sensed rather than saw the rise. The tip of the rod was smashed under the water along with the two loops of line that I had in my left hand. It seemed that all hell had broken out inside that sluice and I rapidly started to back away into the water. I hadn't taken two steps, when fish and line came roaring out of there and bullseye, right between my legs. The rod arched in an alarming manner and I had presence of mind enough to fling the rod butt toward the dam. I tried to raise my leg over the line but only succeeded in losing my balance. There I was sitting neck-deep in water. Frantically grabbing for the rod that was rapidly going by me in the water. My luck held and I caught it by the

reel. As I raised it up, it was quite apparent that the fish was still on and headed downstream.

Scrambling to my knees, I reeled in all excess line that I could and it was then that I realized that I had a hold of an exceptionally fine fish. I pushed myself to my feet and glanced at the reel. A few yards of line

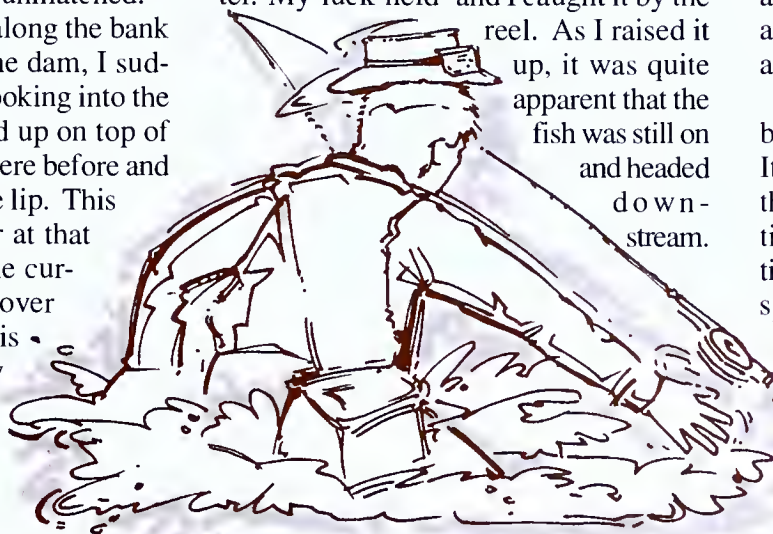
were left. Reeling frantically, I ran along the shore as fast as I could but that monster decided to slide down into the next pool. Stumbling along the shore, I caught up with him there.

Lucky for me he sounded. Wading quietly toward him, I gathered in the line. Slowly I put the pressure on, but you could still feel plenty of power at the end of the line. With a slow upward movement he came to the surface and I almost went in again when I saw the size of him. Too large for the net, I could only hope to beach him. One last power surge for deep water and I had to let him go. There would be no strong-arming that size of fish. I found myself mumbling about the leader holding and let him slowly take out what line was needed. The current then caught him and carried him into the next pool below. I scrambled over the rocks to keep up and wondered who had a hold of whom.

This was his Waterloo, though, and a short time later I had a hold of the leader and slid him ashore. What a trout. Magnificent reddish-brown gold of the under parts blended upward into an almost black-green of the back. Dime-sized or better red-orange spots covered his sides. He'd been in the water a long time. I looked at that hooked jaw and wondered how many legal-sized trout this old cannibal had accounted for. More than I could catch in a season's time, I guessed.

I carried him up on the bank and then looked my rod over. No apparent damage. Pouring the water out of my boots, I went through my jacket to see what I might have lost in the battle. Only my eyeglass case was empty and then I realized that I had them on. Nothing like a fight with a monster trout to make you addle-headed.

Leaving everything on the bank, I walked back up for another look at that sluice. It just seemed impossible that a trout of that size had been living in there all that time. But then, why not? It had protection, adequate food, and it was an unlikely spot for anyone even to suspect he was there. I doubt if even five percent of the anglers passing by even knew of the sluice. This is one fly fisherman who has never forgotten.



ANGLER



# PENNSYLVANIA'S SHALLOW-WATER TROUT LAKE

by Darl Black



*Angler with a 12-pound lake trout caught on light tackle. Fall lake trout average about 11 or 12 pounds. Smaller ones go 6 to 7 pounds. Really big ones go 14 to 15 pounds.*

The soft plastic grub was slammed hard by an unknown fish. The strike felt like an energetic smallmouth. But at the moment of hookset when unmovable resistance was encountered, I thought my jig was snagged. Then I felt movement on the line.

"Big fish!" I said enthusiastically to Lee Duer, my fishing partner. "If this is a smallie, it must be at least seven pounds." But on Lake Erie this fish could be one of several large species.

A minute later, feeling distinct headshaking on the end of the line, I changed my mind. "Might be a big walleye," I told Lee.

With six-pound test, there was no forcing the fish. When it decided to move, I let it do so, feeding it line by backreeling. After several powerful runs I informed Lee that it probably was a negative on being a walleye.

"I can't turn these runs," I added. "Right now this fish is still doing what it wants to."

"Steelhead?" quizzed a perplexed Lee.

"Too slow," I said.

I still had not seen the fish. Each time I worked the fish almost close enough to the surface for a look, it powered deep again.

Before hooking the fish, I had spotted it on my sonar. Duer and I were searching for November smallmouths out of the Commission's North East Access. Cruising a rocky shoal, my LCD unit picked up a large boulder in about 25 feet of water. The screen showed several defined arcs next to the big rock. I slipped a marker over the side, shut down the outboard, lowered the electric motor and positioned the boat for casting. My first cast had been rewarded with an aggressive strike.

After several minutes of fight, my wrists and arms were feeling stressed. "Have that net ready," I advised Lee. "Got to get this critter in."

On the next attempted run I didn't give an inch of line. When the fish let up, I pumped the rod and regained line. The process was repeated until the big fish finally came into view.

Lee quickly scooped the fish into the net. The telltale blue-gray body dotted with pale lighter spots provided an immediate identification—a lake trout.

This was the first lake trout I had taken in the shallow waters of Lake Erie. With years of off-shore trolling for salmon and walleyes under my belt, I had encountered many of these fish in deep



water during the summer. Taken from their deepwater sanctuary on stiff rods and heavy lines, each lake trout came to the surface more like a log than a sportfish. But here in the shallow waters during the fall, the lake trout proved it can be a true performer on light tackle.

My mind flashed back to my first encounter with a lake trout. It was on a trip to Quebec's Lake Kipawa when I was about 14 years old. I was slinging white bucktail jigs in the river below a dam in hopes of catching walleyes. Instead of an 'eye, I tied into a monstrous fish the likes of which I had never seen before. In the extremely clear water, our guide quickly identified it as a lake trout. That day my monofilament parted when I attempted to muscle the fish to shore. However, the desire for a rematch with big lake trout on light tackle remained. Now it had been answered.

I discovered several angling friends were making incidental catches of lake trout in the fall. It was apparent my catch was not a strange shallow-water fluke.

### Lake trout background

A review of fisheries literature refreshed my memory on several points. The lake trout is distributed across Canada and southward into the northern United States. It inhabits deep, clear lakes that have cool depths and an adequate dissolved oxygen below the summer thermocline. Although called a trout, it is actually a slow-growing, long-lived char. Lake trout spawn in the fall over gravel, rocky or boulder rubble bottoms, perhaps as deep as 100 feet in some lakes or as shallow as 20 feet in other lakes.

The lake trout population in the Great Lakes was decimated when sea lamprey gained entry into the lake system. The parasitic lamprey attaches itself to the soft-skin trout and literally sucks the life from the fish. Smaller native freshwater lamprey, by the way, do not affect lake trout populations as do the sea lamprey. A continuing program of lamprey control has set the stage for a possible lake trout recovery in the Great Lakes.

Next, I contacted Roger Kenyon, fisheries biologist in the Commission Lake Erie Research Section. He related the Great Lakes Fisheries Plan to restore lake trout to the lower Great Lakes. Annual fingerling stocking is underwritten by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service with all the trout raised at the federal hatchery near Warren, Pennsylvania. Initially the target goal was 400,000 fingerling trout each year for the Eastern Basin of Lake Erie. However, the actual numbers are running about 160,000. In part the reduction is caused by concern over decline of smelt in the lower Great Lakes.

The lake trout's historical deepwater food sources such as cisco, whitefish, ling and sculpin are not abundant in present day Lake Erie. Because of the accidental introduction of non-native smelt into the Great Lakes, lake trout have keyed on smelt as their major source of forage. But smelt are currently at an all time low in Erie, therefore the higher stocking rate of trout fingerlings was not seen as prudent.

"The size of the Lake Erie lake trout stock is close to what we think is necessary to reach the established goals," says Kenyon. "Right now there are enough mature lake trout for potential reproduction. There are old fish as well as younger advancing age groups. The population may be missing two- and three-year-olds, because we have not found them in our samplings. However, there is strong suspicion these young fish have changed habits and moved to deeper water than we are sampling. All in all, the stock has responded to our initial expectations."

*This 15-pound lake trout was caught in water less than 30 feet deep. Lines of 15- to 20-pound test fit the bill.*



Kenyon says that in the past very young lake trout were typically found in 60 to 70 feet of water where there were plenty of young smelt. However, with fewer smelt, some Great Lakes biologists believe the younger trout have moved to deeper water in search of traditional forage. At the present time, biologists are not overly concerned with the absences of the very young trout because the older fish are not showing evidence of nutritional losses.

"The trout appear to be finding something to eat," states Kenyon. "If there are not enough smelt, the lake trout will probably switch



# PENNSYLVANIA'S SHALLOW-WATER TROUT LAKE

to sculpin and whitefish.

"So far, there is no evidence of wide-spread natural reproduction of lake trout in Erie," he continues. "All the fish sampled have the coded wire tags which were implanted when stocked as fingerlings. Only an occasional one has turned up without a tag."

The federal restoration program is scheduled for evaluation in the year 2000. If natural reproduction is not occurring by then, stocking may be dropped.

## Fall tactics

"Lake trout prefer water temperature around 48 degrees," Kenyon points out. "However, they will penetrate the shallows following the first cool temperature drop of three or four degrees. You might expect to see them shallow with water temperature in the low 50s."

That temperature guideline is seconded by Erie angler Bob Chandler. Chandler, whose regular job is Director of the Erie Chamber of Commerce, happened into the shallow-water lake trout pattern several years ago and he has since been promoting the fall fishery for these majestic native fish.

"Lake trout fight much better in the cold, shallow water than they do when taken from deep water in the summer," Chandler says. "Granted, lake trout are not as spectacular as the acrobatic steelhead, but on light tackle they are a lot of fun."

Chandler usually trolls for the shallow lake trout with offshore walleye tackle, but has used noodle rods on occasion for the fish, too. His best day was 41 lake trout caught and released by his fishing party during five hours of fishing. The day immediately before, they caught 25 trout.

"The lake trout we catch in the fall are averaging 11 to 12 pounds," says Chandler. "The smaller ones will go about eight pounds and the bigger ones will tip 14 pounds. We release all the fish."

In Pennsylvania waters, lake trout may show up anywhere east of the port of Erie. The chances improve closer to the New York line. According to Kenyon, the rubble shoals near the Pennsylvania/New York border are historic spawning grounds for this fish.

Chandler has identified the productive late fall depth for lake trout as shallower than 30 feet. This exactly matches my limited experience for the fish, too. When water temperature approaches 50 degrees, smallmouth stack up in the 30-foot to 45-foot depths, while lake trout hold court on the tops of the bars or shoals.

"We typically use the same tackle for lake trout as we do for walleye in deep water," explains Chandler. "Our rods are spooled with 15-pound test for side planers and 20-pound test on downriggers. The boat speed will be between 1.9 and 2.2 miles per hour. I've got to be careful not to get too shallow with the big boat, but we have taken lakers as shallow as eight feet."

Chandler's hottest lures are minnow stickbaits on the planer boards and spoons on the downriggers. His favorite body bait is the standard six-inch Storm Thunkerstick in color patterns 36 (chartreuse), 74 (hot tiger) or 48 (fluorescent red).

"When it comes to spoons, we use some of the dirtiest, ugliest old spoons you have ever seen, as long as the body color is chartreuse with blue tape added. Chartreuse and blue—that's the magic lake trout color for Erie. Even stickbaits can be im-

proved by adding some blue Witchcraft tape."

In addition to spoons, large spinners are a hot bait. One excellent spinner is a size 4 silver blade with chartreuse plastic tubing on the hook shank.

Trolling is not limited to large offshore boats with downriggers and elaborate side planer systems. Anglers can effectively troll for shallow-water lake trout from small boats. When trolling water depths less than 30 feet, it's not difficult to improvise. Inexpensive in-line side planers can put stickbaits out to either side of a boat away from the prop wash. Bottom-bouncers, popular in walleye fishing, can be used in place of downriggers.

Many lake trout have been caught by anglers targeting smallmouths. In these instances, most lakers have come on flashy jigging spoons and blade baits. However, soft plastic grubs and tubes have taken trout, too. The best colors in soft plastic are pearl chartreuse, rainbow trout, and ones loaded with lots of sparkle flake. Darker colors generally fail to attract the trout.

Random fishing the nearshore waters may produce a lake trout, but establishing a plan of attack is usually best. Lakers are more likely to be found on a flat rubble area than on a structure break like smallmouth. Anglers familiar with reading depthfinders can often spot lake trout on the screen before catching them, even in water as shallow as 20 feet. Finding small schools of lake trout on the shoals with sonar works for both trollers and casters.

Tactics for shallow-water Erie lake trout in the 1990s are still being written. If looking for something different, here is a chance to get in on the ground floor of a revitalized fishery.

ANGLER

## A Pure LAKE?

There are those who believe only native species should roam all waterways. They want aquatic systems returned to some earlier "pure" state and purged of introduced species. Regarding the Great Lakes, these individuals have spoken in favor of stocking lake trout and elimination of steelhead, salmon and other non-indigenous species. What does a fisheries biologist think about this?

"Regarding purity of the species, to what historic vantage point do we return?" asks Kenyon. "First off, the lake trout we are stocking are not the exact Great Lake strain. Besides, there is no way we can bring back the blue pike, nor the numbers of lake herring that existed at the turn of the century. I don't think returning a lake eco-system and associated species to some primitive time is possible or even a fruitful endeavor."

"We have been able to reduce the nutrients from Lake Erie almost to the point where squeezing additional phosphate out of the system is no longer cost effective or necessary. Furthermore, the unintentional introduction of certain non-indigenous species seems to be a problem we can't control—such things as zebra mussel, ruffe, etc."

"Although they are not a native gamefish species, we have had great success with steelhead. We may or may not have success with reintroducing lake trout. Instead of restoring Lake Erie to some historic idyllic system—a state we don't even have accurate data for—I think we should focus on the most productive solution for today's needs and future needs."—DB.



*The productive late-fall depth for lake trout is shallower than 30 feet. Smallmouths stack up in the 30-foot to 45-foot depths, and lake trout congregate on the tops of bars and shoals.*

**Many lake trout have been caught by anglers targeting smallmouth bass. Most of these lakers have been caught on flashy jigging spoons and blade baits. Soft-plastic grubs and tubes have also taken lake trout.**





entific evidence that fishing during the spawn would severely deplete the resource. I agree that targeting fish while the season is closed is unethical. But if the fish are in season, have a ball.

## Water temperature

Another predictable kind of peak is based purely on water temperature. Maybe the best example of this is along the Lake Erie coast where the shallow near-shore water warms much faster than the rest of the lake. In 10 feet of water the temperature can be 45 degrees while a few hundred yards farther from shore the water might be just 39 degrees. This difference in water temperature translates into energy, which accelerates the food chain. In simple terms, there is more for fish to eat in the warmer water. Virtually all of the Lake Erie gamefish might be caught by trolling through the shallows during April and May.

## Complex peaks

Some other peaks are more complex, both in the timing and in the reasons behind them. In some ways, steelhead peaks that anglers associate with spawning are as predictable as the seasons. In other respects they are as unpredictable as the weather.

Generally, steelhead fishing peaks several times from late October through December, and again during April and May. The latter peak is caused by their spring spawn. The former is, at least in part, caused by the salmon spawn. Steelhead follow salmon into the streams to feed on their eggs. Likewise, steelhead follow suckers into the streams to feed on their eggs, but because that occurs about the same time as the steelhead spawn, the most important reason for the peak is uncertain.

Less predictable steelhead fishing peaks occur on a short term based on weather and water flow. These can be either peaks or peak killers depending on how you look at the situation.

The Pennsylvania tributaries of Lake Erie are smallish. Often they filter through shoreline gravel without a flow large enough for fish to swim. If it is time for the steelhead to move into the tributaries (this can also be applied to the fall salmon run), steelhead stack up just off the tributary mouths. This would be called a peak if you are a boater or surf caster.

# What Makes Fishing PEAK

But if you are a stream angler, it spells bad fishing.

Following rains, or during the winter when a warm spell unlocks the creeks from ice and raises the flows, waves of steelhead move into the tributaries. Fishing peaks while the creeks are rising. High,

*Jeri Bleech with a Lake Erie coho salmon*



muddy water shuts down the fishing. But the peaks begin anew after the water flow crests, when the water begins to clear. By the time the water is very clear, a good portion of the steelhead in the creeks have been caught. Those that remain are much more difficult to catch. The peak is finished. It might have lasted a few days, or just a few hours. Peaks are typically shorter at the smaller tributaries.

## Fall peaks

Though I have addressed the previous peaks without regard to season, so far I

have not gone into any detail on fall peaks. I have been saving my favorite fishing peaks for last. Fall peaks are my favorites because I love fall weather and fall scenery. Also, I love big walleyes.

The fall walleye peak is based on movement and hunger. During fall walleyes tend to move upstream in rivers. Also contributing to the peak, the abundant food supply of summer has dwindled. Walleyes have to look for food longer, and they have to be less fussy about what they eat. This can be applied to most fall fishing. It is true with bass, trout, pike and muskellunge.

Don't expect the fall walleye peak to jump up and bite you. It is not spectacular. Fishing is better than it has been since spring, with a few short-term exceptions, and the average size of the walleyes is noticeably bigger. Size is the feature of this peak. However, you have to put in considerable time and effort.

On the middle Allegheny River, and especially at the Kinzua Dam tailwaters, November is a peak time to fish for big walleyes, the kind that pull scales into double digits. According to my fishing logs, the third week of November is the most likely time to catch a big walleye here.

ANGLER

## Seeing the "big picture"

I have mentioned several of my favorite Pennsylvania fishing peaks. There are many more. A large portion of the articles you read in *Pennsylvania Angler* are about fishing peaks. The key to fishing peaks is carrying a big bag of tricks. The more tricks you have in the bag, the more peaks you can enjoy.

By "tricks" I mean knowledge.

You can note individual peaks for specific fish in specific places. Write them down. Make a fishing calendar of peaks. More importantly, you can learn to recognize peaks, to be alert for peaks. The information I have presented here should get you off to a good start.

Finally, you must be aware that fishing during the peaks is only part of what is required to be successful. In my opinion it is the most critical part. Nonetheless, you still have to know how to fish. Consistently successful fishing is a combination of what, when, where and how.—MB.



# *On the Water*

with Robert L. Petri

## **Other Heroes**

Many "heroes" cross our paths as we travel through this world as anglers. I have mine and I am sure you have yours. Authors, mentors, relatives and friends who introduced us to our sport at some point along the way surely qualify. But let me tell you about a few of my angling heroes of a different kind.

Charlie and Merle were float fishing buddies. Together they chased muskies, walleyes and smallmouth bass down just about every navigable ribbon of flowing water in northwest Pennsylvania. Charlie said that on good days and bad ones, he had all but to threaten Merle with physical violence to get him off the water when it was time to go home. The man was insatiable and driven when he had a rod in his hands.

The hands that held the rod had seen better days. Merle had lost most of the use of his left arm at some point along the way. Some said it had happened in combat in Europe during World War II. Others claimed an industrial accident was responsible. Charlie never told me which, and I'm not sure Merle ever told him.

Although Merle never really said so, Charlie was certain it was an exercise in considerable pain for Merle even to turn the handle on his reel. But turn it he did, again and again, cast after cast. He would not be denied. Merle's bottomless well of determination was a neverending source of amazement to Charlie. There was always an overriding awe in his voice as he would tell me about the preceding weekend's adventures each summer Monday at work.

Merle was also what doctors call a "brittle diabetic." His blood sugars would rise and fall precipitously without warning. He was a walking time bomb. Once while drifting down Conneaut Creek in search of muskies, Merle suddenly began cursing and screaming at Charlie from the stern of the canoe. Then suddenly he told Charlie he loved him like a brother. Then he started cursing again. Charlie turned around to find his friend in the throes of a sudden and severe insulin reaction. He beached the canoe and crashed through a half-mile of the meanest brush in Erie County to fetch a can of warm Coke from the car to pour down Merle's throat to bring his metabolism back into balance.

Merle chugged the Coke, closed his eyes for a few moments and then began casting again. Charlie pushed the canoe away from the bank and shook his head in wonder once again at how much this man loved to fish.

Pastor Bob grew up along the banks of the Susquehanna and cut his angling teeth on the trout streams of Pennsylvania's northcentral mountains. He was still a relatively young man when a pair of progressive, degenerative muscle disorders attacked him almost simultaneously. The diseases took much of the strength from his limbs and substantially impaired his vision. But they could not touch his heart or his determination. He pursues his work for the church and his fishing with equal vigor and enthusiasm. His life is a celebration of the art of the possible.

My brother recently had the opportunity to spend the morn-

ing on the broad flats of Oil Creek with Pastor Bob. The Pastor told him not to worry about holding back and waiting on him as they walked along the banks. Whatever it took, he would be right behind him. And he was.

My brother watched as the Pastor worked his way slowly out into the flow, and positioned himself among the rising trout. Using the stronger of his two arms, he began to cast. Occasionally my brother would go over and help the Pastor tie on a different fly as they worked together on solving the eternal riddle of rising Oil Creek trout.

The morning sun traveled in an ascending arc through the sky. The trout continued to rise. Each of them landed and released five fat Oil Creek browns before they called it a morning. My brother said he had seldom seen such determination anywhere as what Pastor Bob showed him that day. To the Pastor, it was just another day spent fishing.

***The diseases took much of the strength from his limbs and substantially impaired his vision. But they could not touch his heart or his determination.***

In the twilight of a hot July day last year, I worked a favorite section of French Creek near Meadville for smallmouths. In the fading light, I saw an angler in the pool below me raise his rod tip and set the hook into a good fish. A few minutes later as he brought the bass to hand, I waded in alongside him to have a look. "Nice fish," I offered. He was looking down, unhooking the bass and did not reply. Just as I began to repeat myself, he looked up and saw me. His hands went first to his ears, lightly brushing the lobes, and then he touched his lips. He was without hearing or speech. I smiled and held my hand up in greeting. I had just completed a beginner's course in American sign language, and I haltingly spoke to him with my hands: "Beautiful fish, congratulations."

The intensity of his smile would have shamed the sun. His reply was simple and eloquent. His hand flew to his chest. Then he crossed his arms and grasped his shoulders in the manner of a hug. Then his arms flew out and waved through the air to take in the night, the water and the fish: "I love all this." I think that both Merle and Pastor Bob would agree with me that no one could have said it better.

These are my angling heroes of another kind. In the face of physical adversity and difficulty, their spirit seems only to grow stronger. They have taken the power of determination and used it to continue to pursue the sport they love. Here's to them, each one. They are among the finest of our fellow travelers on the water, and an inspiration to us all.





## Pink Salmon Record Established

Add another page to the record books: The Fish and Boat Commission has recognized a 3-pound, 4-ounce pink salmon as an official state record for the species.

The 21 1/2-inch salmon had an 11-inch girth. Harry L. Gregor of Erie caught the fish on June 24, 1995. Gregor, 71, caught the fish on a spoon.

Gregor's fish is the first pink salmon to receive official recognition as a Pennsylvania state record. The record category was initially created in 1990 when commercial fishermen and charterboat captains began reporting catches of the species in Lake Erie. Until Gregor's catch, however, no pink salmon documented by the Commission exceeded the 3-pound minimum the agency established for its award program.

## Cast & Caught



David Beattie, Pittsburgh, enticed this steelhead to strike using an egg sac. The Lake Erie fish was 29 inches long and weighed 11 pounds, 5 ounces.



North East resident Chad Fuller, age 14, was fishing on Lake Erie when this walleye grabbed his lure. The fish weighed 8 pounds, 8 ounces and was 28 inches in length.

## The Law and You *by Jeff Bridi*

*May I legally fillet my fish along the stream?*

All fish may be field-dressed (that is, the entrails may be removed but the head and tail remain on the fish), but not all fish may be legally filleted along the stream. Filleting is the removal of the edible meat found along the sides of the fish. Any fish that has a minimum size and/or a closed season may not be filleted until it reaches the place where you intend to eat it (in most cases, your residence).

Fish that have no closed season or minimum size may be filleted, but the skin must remain on the fillet until it reaches the place where you intend to eat it. For example, a fisherman may fillet crappies, catfish and perch along the stream as long as the skin remains on the fillet. Fishermen may not fillet walleyes or trout along the stream.

There are two exceptions to this rule. Fishermen who go to a licensed regulated fishing lake (a fee-fishing area) may have their fish filleted. However, they will also receive a receipt from the establishment to identify the source. Anglers may also take fish to an officially recognized fish cleaning station and have them filleted. The operator of the station is required to give the angler a receipt, indicating the species and number of fish filleted.

Anglers who field-dress their fish should also consider the landowner before field-dressing their catch. A large amount of entrails can create an unsightly, smelly mess on someone's property, causing strained angler/landowner relations. Anglers should ensure that the property owner has no objection to your field-dressing the catch, and you should ensure that the entrails are disposed of in a sanitary fashion.

*What is the proper way to display my fishing license?*

Many anglers are concerned about the requirements regarding the display of their fishing licenses. However, the regulations that prescribe the displaying of the license are actually simple. First, the license must be on your person while you are fishing. Second, the regulations require that the license certificate be displayed on a hat or outer garment. They are the only requirements relating to displaying a license.

Anglers often ask why we require that the license be displayed because many anglers fear that the license may be more easily lost or damaged by rain. Displaying the license allows waterways conservation officers to quickly and easily verify that anglers do indeed have a license. It also is more convenient for anglers because they do not have to stop fishing and find a license in their pocket, wallet or other location if checked by an officer. For these reasons displaying your fishing license on a hat or fishing vest provides a benefit both to the officers and fishermen.

Anglers should also be aware of the requirement in the law that they carry some positive means of identification, a driver's license, for example, to establish identity to the satisfaction of a waterways conservation officer.

License display and possession requirements are really quite simple when you take a closer look at them. Anglers should buy a sturdy license holder with a secure pin and attach the holder to a fishing vest or other item of clothing that they always have along when fishing.

*Do you have a question on a fishing or boating law or regulation? Write to: Jeffrey S. Bridi, Assistant of the Director, Bureau of Law Enforcement, PA Fish & Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.*



# Anglers Currents

## 1997 Trout Stamp Art Rules

The Fish and Boat Commission is seeking wildlife artists to participate in the 1997 Trout/Salmon Stamp and Print competition by submitting a work featuring one of the Commonwealth's most scenic streams.

The juried contest is an annual event, with entries from artists throughout the United States. The winning entry will be depicted on the Commission's Trout/Salmon Stamp in 1997 and will be reproduced in several limited edition prints. Artists looking to compete for the 1997 title must depict one of a select group of streams.

The scene may include angler(s) and/or trout. However, the primary focus should be the stream. The work may be in oil, acrylic or watercolor and measure 12 inches by 18 inches with a one-inch border. Artists must submit a completed entry form with the image. Noted on the form must be the stream depicted. Entries will be checked for authenticity.

The top entry will be featured on the stamp, required for all licensed trout anglers. The winning artist will receive up-front payments of \$3,000, as well as fees for signed prints, stamps and mini-prints. The original work will become the property of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

Second- and third-place winners will be awarded \$1,000 and \$500 respectively.

The Commission held the initial art contest to select the 1991 "First-of-State" stamp. That stamp featured an aggressive brook trout—Pennsylvania's official state fish. Subsequent stamps featured brown trout ('92), rainbow trout ('93), brook trout ('94) and most recently steelhead trout ('95).

The 1996 edition, which goes on sale December 1, 1995, introduces a new series of stamps featuring the state's worldclass patch. The colorful patch will feature the winning design of the 1996 Pennsylvania Trout Stamp. Both the patch and limited edition art prints are officially Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission-endorsed and are available directly from the publisher: Wilderness Editions, RD 1, Box 73, Warriors Mark, PA 16877 (phone: 800-355-7645).

For more information on the 1997 contest, including the official rules of entry, artists should write to Timothy L. Klinger, Trout/Salmon Stamp Program Manager, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000, or call (717) 657-4537.—*Dan Tredinnick.*

County	Selected Stream
Berks	Tulpehocken Creek
Cameron	Sinnemahoning Creek, Driftwood Branch
Cameron	Sinnemahoning Creek, First Fork
Centre	Spring Creek
Centre	Bald Eagle Creek
Centre	Penns Creek
Clinton	Fishing Creek
Crawford	Oil Creek
Cumberland	Yellow Breeches Creek
Cumberland	Letort Spring Run
Dauphin	Clarks Creek
Franklin	Falling Spring Branch
Huntingdon	Little Juniata River
Jefferson	Clear Creek
Lackawanna	Ash Creek
Lawrence	Neshannock Creek
Lycoming	Loyalsock Creek
Lycoming	Cedar Run
Lycoming	Slate Run
Mifflin	Penns Creek
Northampton	Monocacy Creek
Philadelphia	Wissahickon Creek
Pike	Toms Creek
Potter	Kettle Creek
Potter	Sinnemahoning Creek, First Fork
Potter	Sinnemahoning Creek, East Fork
Schuylkill	Little Schuylkill River
Somerset	Isers Run
Sullivan	Loyalsock Creek
Tioga	Cedar Run
Venango	Oil Creek
Westmoreland	Mell Creek, South Fork

Coming to Easton. . .

## A DAY ON THE RIVER

MARKING 125 YEARS OF BASS MANAGEMENT IN PENNSYLVANIA

Help the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission celebrate this milestone event.

# Saturday October 7<sup>th</sup>

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Scott Park, Downtown Easton

**Exhibits • Displays • Demonstrations**

SEE actual recreation, with horse-drawn wagon of the first stocking of smallmouth bass in Pennsylvania—at the site of the original stocking in October 1870!



PLUS more than 20 other exhibits and demonstrations along with numerous other organizations participating

Sponsored by the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission

### OTHER INTERESTING EXHIBITS AND DISPLAYS

- Fish Filleting & Cooking
- Fly Tying & Lure Making
- Kids Program
- Boating Safety
- Fishing Clinic
- Stream Ecology
- Casting Techniques
- Biologists At Work





## Cast & Caught



Steve Kollar, of Holland, earned a Senior Angler Award for this nice smallmouth bass. He caught the fish in the Delaware River. It weighed 5 pounds, 3 ounces and measured 21 3/4 inches in length.



Twelve-year-old Caleb Lytle, Altoona, shows off his opening day trophy—a 23-inch palomino trout. The fish, caught on a mealworm, weighed more than 5 pounds and was taken from Chest Creek.

## Angler's Notebook *by Jeff Bryan*



One of the most popular gamefish in the United States is the white bass, as well as one of the best tasting. Jigs of all types should be your first choice of lures when going after white bass. Favorite colors for trailers are white, gray, red and chartreuse.

For your boat to run most efficiently, it is important to perform routine maintenance on both the boat and the motor. All filter and fuel systems should be checked once a year, and plugs should be checked and cleaned with every 20 hours of operation.

When fishing with a spinning rod and reel, make a habit of looking down at your spool often during retrieves. If a small loop appears in the line, stop reeling and strip the line off the spool until the loop disappears. Remember, a small loop eventually becomes a big loop, and a big loop eventually becomes a mass of tangled mono—and perhaps a lost fish.

Most experts agree that stainless steel props are better than aluminum props, because they are superior performers at mid-range and top-end speeds. Aluminum props cost less, but they are easier to break and damage, and are provided as standard equipment on most engines. New boat-buyers would be well-served to barter

for a quality stainless unit, and save the aluminum one as a spare.

Fishing during a cold front can be very tough, but certainly not impossible if you keep a few points in mind. River bass most often burrow into stationary cover, so slow your fishing considerably and try jigs, spinnerbaits and crankbaits. If you are fishing a lake, consider the headwaters of the lake's major tributaries, because fast-water fish tend to remain more active. The fish hold tight to cover, so make multiple casts right into the heavy stuff.

The popularity of pre-made knotless, tapered leaders has changed the way many fishermen rig their terminal fly tackle. Most of these packaged leaders come with a loop already tied in one end, making it simple to change leaders quickly while on the stream. All you need to do is rig your fly line with a perfection loop so you can loop on a new leader whenever the need arises.

When fighting a fish with a fly rod, many beginners subconsciously move their non-cranking hand up the rod to gain more leverage. This is absolutely the wrong thing to do, because it effectively shortens the rod and actually reduces its efficiency. It is also a very good way to break a rod. Keep your hands on the handle and raise the rod above your head to gain more leverage.

Midge pupae are found in most all trout waters, so it's important to have a few patterns in your vest. Here's a very easy fly to tie that seems to work when trout won't hit anything else. Use a dry fly hook in sizes 18 to 24, and wrap a body of thread and add one turn of ostrich herl at the head. Instant midge pupa. Fish it as you would a nymph.

illustration: Ted Walke



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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# SMART

## Angler's Notebook

by Carl Richardson

### Fish Senses: Taste and Smell

**Question:** How do fish smell and taste?

**Answer:** They smell pretty bad and taste good, especially when breaded and deep-fried!

#### SMELL AND TASTE

Whether it is a cherry pie or a dead fish, there are smells and tastes. What we smell and taste are special chemicals. The bad smell from a dead fish is from chemicals in the air we breathe through our noses. The

the olfactory organ transmit the signals, to the brain where they are read. Fish have a sensitive sense of smell, detecting concentrations of chemicals as low one in a trillion. One part per trillion is one ounce of stuff dissolved in a million railroad tank cars full of water. Migratory fish like salmon can detect smells from the rivers where they were born—from hundreds of miles away.

#### TASTE

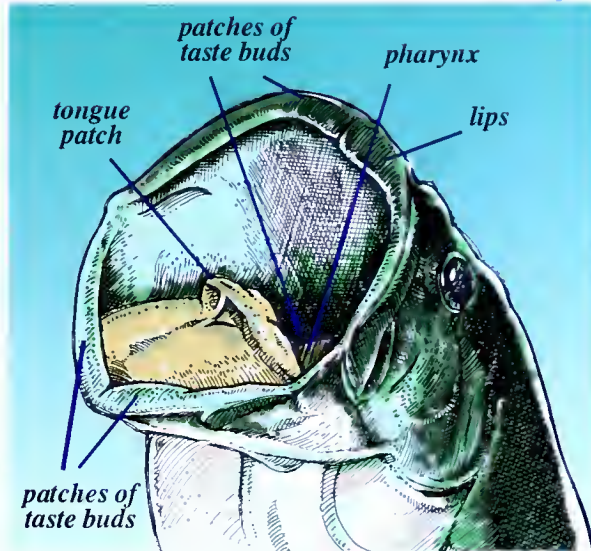
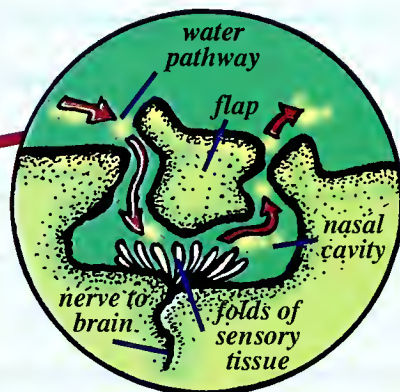
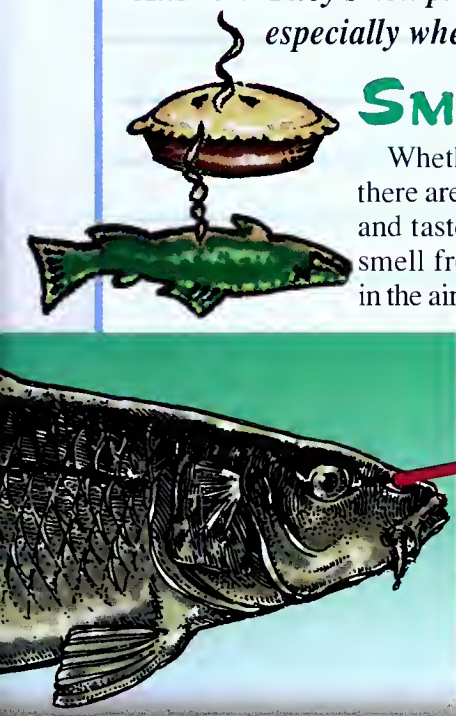
Much like humans, fish have taste buds that react to chemicals dissolved in the water. We humans have about 10,000 taste buds on our tongues. Fish have even more and they are found on the lips, in the mouth, and deep inside the mouth. Catfish have taste buds on their skin and barbels. They have more taste buds on their bodies than we have in our mouths! Some catfish can taste things some 15 feet away.

#### FISHING

Knowing that fish rely on these senses can help anglers. By using scents or attractants we fool fish into thinking the lure we are using is food. Scents can help hide the smells of the lure, our perspiration or bug spray on our hands. When fish can't see well, at night or when the water is muddy, we use smelly live bait or spray on scent. If they taste that the lure is a fake or smell bug spray from our hands, they spit out the bait. If it tastes and smells like a crayfish, they eat it. Isn't that what we want?

#### SMELL AND TASTE TIPS FOR SMART ANGLERS

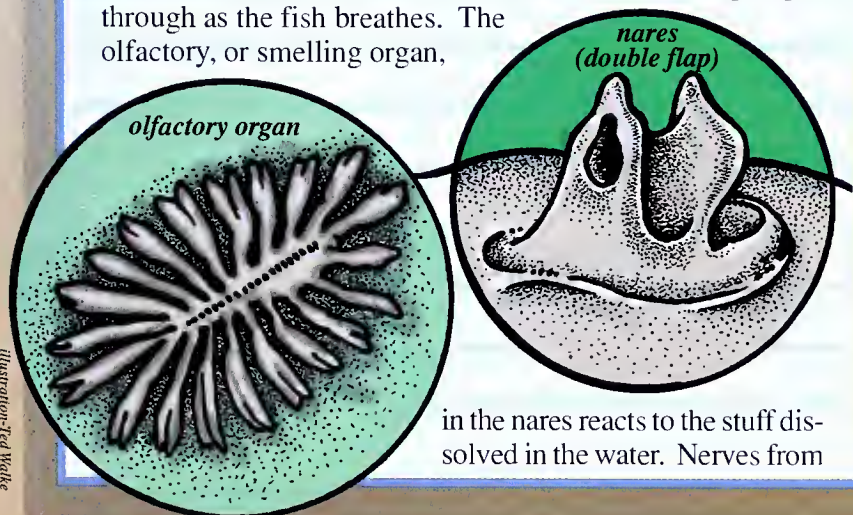
- Wipe the bug spray or gas from your hands before tying on a lure or putting bait on the hook.
- When using live bait, make sure it is alive. Dead bait smells and tastes differently than live bait.
- When making stinkbait for catfish—you know it is ready when the neighbor's cat won't even go near it.
- There are two ways you can use artificial scents. One masks your smell. The other imitates the smells and tastes of the real thing.
- If you add scents to your lures, remember to add some regularly.



taste of a cherry pie comes from chemicals dissolved in our saliva and tasted by our taste buds. Because fish live in water, everything they smell and taste is dissolved in water. They are taking a bath in this stuff, so the two senses work the same way. The sense of smell detects things at a distance, and taste works at close ranges. Fish use these senses together to locate food, find mates and detect predators. The sense of smell even helps migratory fish find their way home.

#### SENSE OF SMELL

The smell, or olfactory sense, is located in the fish's nostrils. There are two pairs of these nostrils, called nares, on both sides of a fish's snout. Water flows through the nares as the fish swims. Water is also carried by current and pumped through as the fish breathes. The olfactory, or smelling organ,

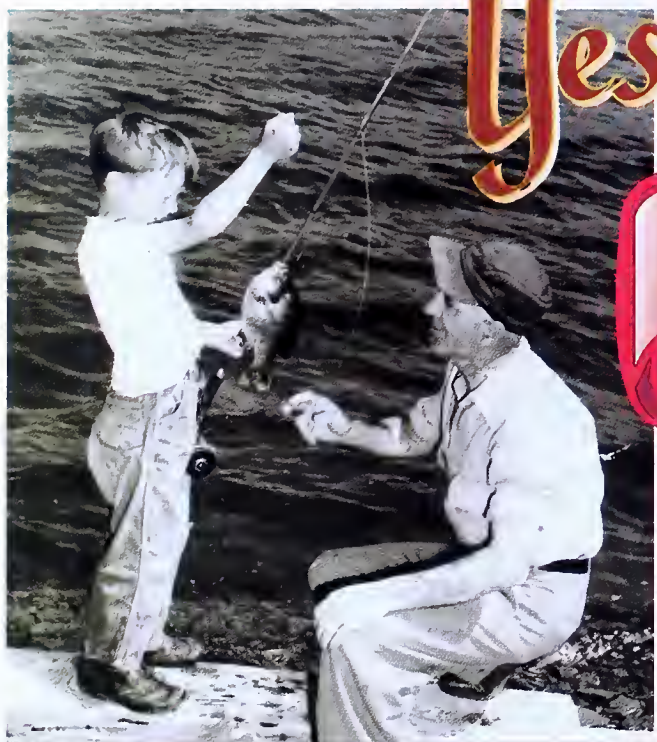


in the nares reacts to the stuff dissolved in the water. Nerves from



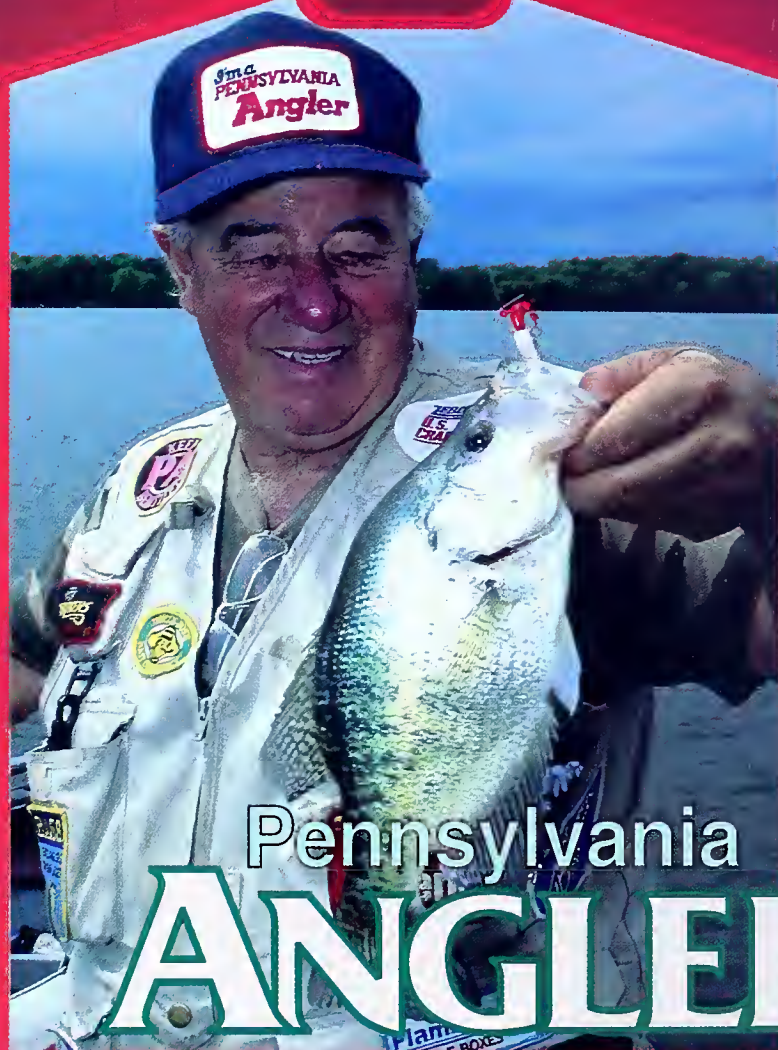


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# Pennsylvania ANGLER

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# Straight Talk

## The 1996 Summary's New Look

There's a new look to the 1996 *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws* booklet that all anglers receive with their fishing licenses. The booklet is now printed in the convenient digest size, it's colorful and more readable, and it contains advertising.

When the Fish and Boat Commission approached the General Assembly seeking legislation to address the Fish Fund's critical revenue needs, we were told to look for alternative sources of revenues. One of the first ideas identified by several members of the General Assembly was the idea of putting advertisements in some Commission publications.

At the January 1995 meeting of the Fish and Boat Commission, the Commission directed the staff to explore including advertising in the *Summary* booklets, distributed to the more than one million purchasers of fishing licenses. We surveyed all the other states and found that, of those responding, most states had some sort of advertising program for publications similar to the *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws*. In a few states, the advertising revenues covered the entire cost of the publication; other states had more modest programs.

Under state purchasing procedures, the Commission had to open competition for a contract to publish the *Summary* to firms from across the country. The Commission issued a request for proposals to more than a dozen firms seeking bids to undertake the work of selling advertisements, laying out, publishing and distributing the *Summary*. Although we received expressions of interest from many companies, only two firms submitted proposals. After a thorough evaluation following state contracting procedures, WJF Marketing Services of Lebanon, Oregon, was selected as the contractor because of lower costs and a better technical proposal. WJF is the publisher for similar publications in several other states. We completed the contract in late July 1995.

Since the new *Summary* has hit the streets, we've received about 30 phone calls and letters, mostly from fishing license issuing agents. Several issuing agents expressed disappointment that they were not contacted to purchase advertisements in the new *Summary*. The Fish and Boat Commission gave the contractor the list of all issuing agents as a potential source of advertisers. WJF contacted many potential advertisers, but because of the tight publication schedule in the first year of this program, they did not contact all the issuing agents. Several issuing agents who were contacted declined to participate in this new program. All issuing agents will have the opportunity to place ads in the 1997 *Summary*.

A few issuing agents have expressed reservations about *Summary* booklets containing ads for their competitors. This is a new program, and we understand their concerns. The Commission wants to ensure that each purchaser of a Pennsylvania fishing license receives a *Summary*. The angler is already in the agent's business when he or she purchases the license and receives the booklet. Obviously, distributing the *Summary* does not reduce business from those customers. Most issuing agents already sell or distribute publications that contain advertisements, and the business impacts of the *Summary* are no different. The Fish and Boat Commission does not endorse any product or service advertised in the booklet.

If we had continued the old format for the *Summary*, it would have cost the Commission more than \$60,000 more than we spent for this new format. We hope to save even more next year as the booklet attracts even more advertisers.

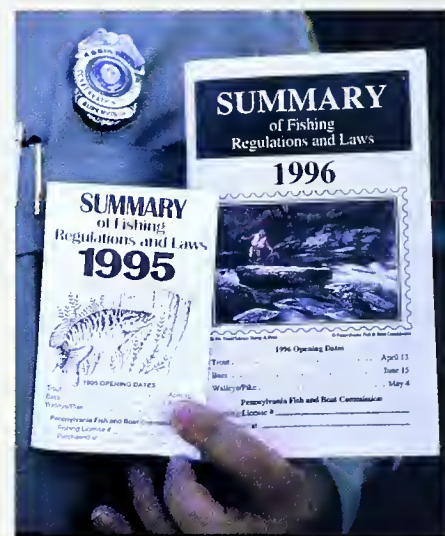
It's sometimes hard to get used to something new, but we don't believe the new format detracts from the important information in the *Summary*. Considering the tight schedule for the first year of production of this new format, we believe the vast majority of anglers will be pleased with the new look and won't object to the ads. For next year, we promise that our contractor will do even better in making sure that everyone who wants to advertise in the booklet has the opportunity. The Commission wants to thank all its issuing agents and all the purchasers of fishing licenses for their understanding and support.



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*Executive Director*

*Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission*



*Peter A. Colangelo*



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*This issue's front cover, photographed by Mike Bleech, shows Worth Hammond with a 3 1/4-pound brook trout he caught through the ice in a northern tier lake. Details: Page 8.*

## North Branch Susquehanna River Walleyes

Walleye anglers in northeast Pennsylvania have a lot to look forward to. Robert E. Moase, Commission Area 4 Fisheries Manager, and Fisheries Technician Tim Copeland surveyed the North Branch Susquehanna River last October. They were initially planning to survey smallmouth bass so they could compare new data with information gathered from summer samples. Instead, they found walleyes—tons of them.

"We electrofished at two sites, Tunkhannock and Wysox," Moase says. "At the Tunkhannock site our electrofishing catch rate was 202 walleyes per hour. At the Wysox site it was 247 per hour. This catch rate is the highest I've seen. In the past a good walleye catch rate for electrofishing was about 30 or 40 per hour. This is a super year."

From Sunbury upstream to the New York state line, the North Branch flows about 164 miles, with another small portion in Susquehanna County. Moase electrofished young-of-the-year walleyes, each about six to nine inches long.

"By the fall of 1996, some of those fish will be legal-sized, based on growth studies we've done in the past," Moase says. "In 1997 there should be a lot of legal-sized walleyes in the North Branch."

What's more, Moase was working with a crew of one, which means only one person aboard the survey boat was netting fish at the bow.

"When I was netting, I couldn't keep up with the number of fish there. The catch rate would have been ever higher if we had been working with a full crew with another person netting fish."

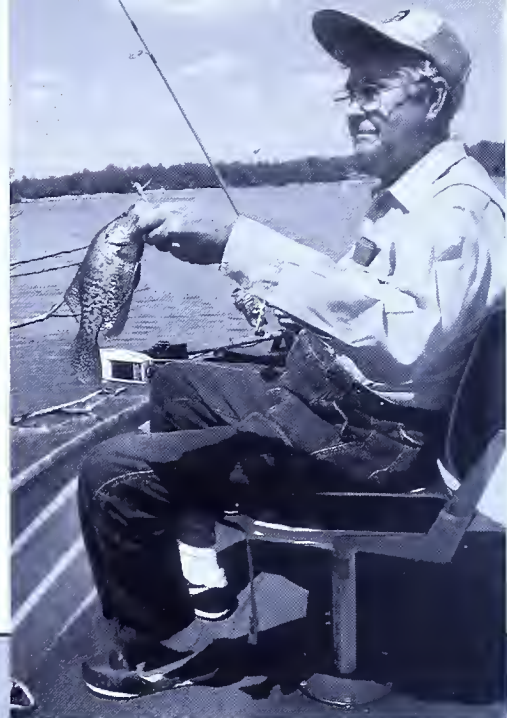
Moase says there will be some natural selection there, and we will lose some of these fish. "But even so," he says, "there's a pile of fish out there. I think it's a banner year. I'm making jigheads and gearing up for it. We're buying another freezer here."—Art Michaels.





# Making JIGS

by Darl Black



*Homemade bucktail and marabou jigs*

My first homemade jig made history. It was April 1973. I was participating in my first bass tournament with the Quaker City Anglers of Philadelphia. The site was a small natural lake in southern New Jersey. The bass were uncooperative; neither my partner nor I had caught one all morning.

Over the previous winter I had tried my hand at molding and tying jigs, and I had a couple of those lures with me. In a last-ditch attempt to catch a bass, I tied on one of my 1/8-ounce white bucktail-marabou-chenille creations. Within minutes I caught two 12-inch bass.

"Got an extra one of those jigs?" inquired my partner. I was happy to give him one, which he quickly tied on his line. On the third cast he received a smashing strike. When the tussle was over, a largemouth weighing almost 7 pounds was in the net. At the time, it was the largest bass I had ever seen.

In addition to easily capturing lunker award for the day, that 6-pound, 15-ounce bass established a new club record. When asked at weigh-in what the fish was caught on, my partner held up the lure and nodded toward me. "One of Black's homemade jigs."

The combination of wet marabou and bucktail, badly chewed by the big fish, was not a pretty sight. "Looks like the tail of a drowned rat," said one of the club's top fishermen. The "rat jig" name stuck and everyone wanted some before the next outing.

## Why make jigs?

Most experienced anglers agree: Jigs are the single deadliest all-around lure for gamefish and panfish. Depending on color and size, along with the specific retrieve, a jig may imitate a baitfish, crayfish, insect or almost anything else that fish feed on.

With the abundance of lures available in tackle stores, someone always asks why go to the trouble of making jigs?

First, there is satisfaction in catching fish on a lure you created—or watching a friend do it. Each time I detect a strike when fishing a homemade jig, a tingling feeling flows through my body, reminding me I crafted this lure.

Second, making lures provides a special connection to the sport. In today's society it is easy to buy your way into an activity without actually investing a piece of yourself. Making lures



creates a personal investment that makes fishing so much more meaningful.

Next, jig-making is an excellent hobby. Most serious anglers find a lot of time on their hands during the icy-cold winter months. There are only so many times you can watch the same fishing videos. Turning spare time into jig-making time allows hardcore fishermen to survive from Christmas to ice-out.

Finally, it's a matter of quality. The consumer market is saturated with cheap hand-tied jigs. Hooks are inferior and the wrappings are poorly secured. The few high-quality jigs from noted individual hand-tiers have a correspondingly high price. But making lures yourself lets you create a custom jig with quality components and reliable workmanship at a reasonable cost.

### Start by molding

A jig is a metal weight (usually lead or lead alloy) molded to a special jig hook and dressed with a body of hair, feather, fur, rubber, tinsel, artificial fur, soft plastic or any combination of these materials. Of course, it is possible to buy plain jig heads already molded and add the desired body material. But making leadheads from scratch allows for customizing that cannot be realized when buying pre-molded heads.

"I prefer to mold my own leadheads for bass and walleyes because I want a quality hook and a larger size hook than you can find in most mass-produced leadheads," says Dave Homstein, an accomplished angler and tackle crafter who has been pouring lead for a quarter-century. "A bigger hook on a bucktail gives a better bite. Although each mold calls for a certain size hook based on the weight of the head, I always use the largest hook that fits the mold. In other words, if a 3/32-ounce ball head mold calls for a size 4 hook, I squeeze a size 1 into the cavity."

The reverse is also true. When molding jigs for panfish, a smaller hook than recommended may be desired. Care must be taken when using larger and smaller hooks so the wire sets in the slot correctly and that the mold closes properly.

In addition to a mold and hooks, jig-making requires a quantity of lead, something to melt lead in, and a heat source. Because of the threatened ban on lead in the U.S. in recent years, a few commercial firms are using metals other than lead in their sinkers and jigheads. However, other metals, such as bismuth, are not as dense as lead. Therefore, a 1/4-ounce bismuth jighead is larger than a 1/4-ounce lead jighead. However, at this writing lead remains legal, and it is the most practical and cost-effective choice for the home pourer.

The most common source of lead for the casual tackle crafter is wheel weights, often obtained for free at service stations. However, the alloy mix in wheel weights does not melt and pour as smoothly as purer forms of lead. Voids are common in small jigs when using wheel weights.

Check the local scrap yard for soft-lead sources. If not available, pure lead ingots may be purchased from major tackle shops or from plumbing supply houses. This is a soft lead that melts easily and completely fills the mold cavities.

A large selection of quality hinged molds is available through tackle craft catalogs such as Barlow's Tackle Shop (Box 830369, Richardson, TX 75083) and Netcraft (2800 Tremainsville, Rd., Toledo, OH 43613). I prefer Do-It Molds; their Pro series and Production Series have very close tolerances that produce heads with minimal flash.

"Flash" is the thin sliver of lead that runs between the two

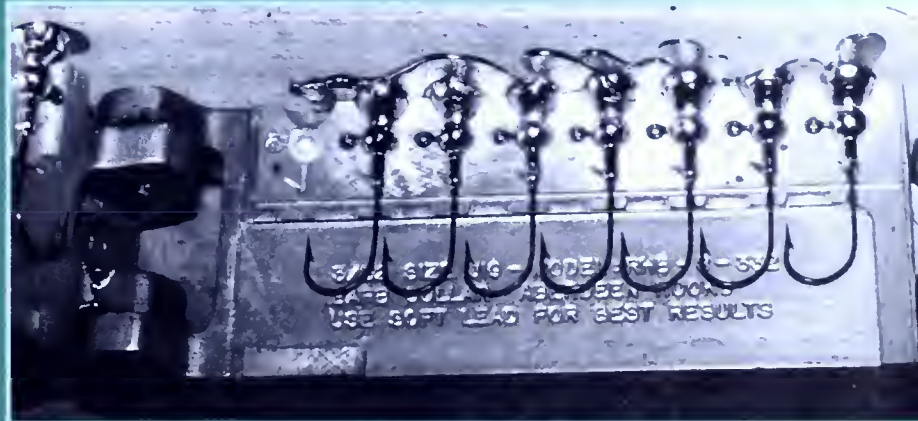


## Basic Steps to Making Jigs

*This mold (above) is loaded with jig hooks before pouring the lead. Closing the mold holds the hooks in place. At right, lead is poured into a mold from a bottom-feed furnace.*



*High heat dries a mold's hinge pin lubrication quickly, so oil your mold hinge pins often to keep them from sticking. Leadheads (below) are in an opened mold with the stems (sprue) still attached. Don't try to pour each leadhead separately in a multiple-cavity mold. Make one smooth pass so the jigs are joined at the top of the gates.*





# Making JIGS

halves of improperly closed molds. Flash may be trimmed from a leadhead with a utility knife, but using quality molds avoids it in the first place. Hilts and Li'l Mac are also recognized as offering quality molds.

The style and weight of jigheads are matters of personal choice based on species targeted and fishing technique. There may be as many as 20 different jighead styles on the market. At \$22 to \$30 per mold, it's a good idea to think through exactly which molds suit your needs best before buying. However, it's hard to go wrong with 1/16-ounce, 1/8-ounce and 1/4-ounce standard ball heads for an initial mold.

If you fish plastic grubs, as most of us do, I suggest getting a mold with a barb on the collar. This style is intended for use with plastic grubs. To use for tying a hair or feather body, squeeze the barb down with a pair of pliers.

Forming an informal "leadhead co-operative" with friends is one way to have access to a variety of different molds. In a co-operative, molds are shared among a circle of fishing friends with each member providing his own hooks and raw lead. When someone in the group decides to purchase a new mold, do not buy one that someone else already has.

Our cooperative has pouring parties. Two or three of us get together at one location with different molds and form a production line where one individual loads hooks into the mold, another pours the molten lead into the gates (or sprue holes) and removes the completed leadheads, and another individual trims the sprue (or stem) from the heads.

Some novices heat lead in an old pot on the kitchen stove. That's how I poured my first jigs years ago. However, jig pouring is a messy operation that is best moved to a work area in the basement or garage. For the casual pourer, a camp stove makes a perfect heat source. Lead can be melted in a heavy flat-bottom pot and dipped with a cast iron ladle for pouring into the mold. Serious pourers use an electric-element hot pot (starting at \$25) or a heat-controlled bottom-feed electric furnace (some as low as \$50). All these units are available in tackle craft catalogs.

"Pure lead melts at 630 degrees, but I pour at 700 to 725 degrees for best results," says Al Claypoole, who markets a line of jigs and spinnerbaits under the name B.A. Baits. "If you have a furnace with temperature control, knowing the right temperature is not a problem. However, for the beginner, knowing when the lead is ready takes a bit of practice. If you pour before it is hot enough, the lead will clump and set up before filling cavities.

"As lead begins to melt in a pot or furnace, sludge must be skimmed from the surface," says Claypoole. "An old table-spoon is effective for skimming these impurities. When the lead gets a smooth purple or golden sheen to it, it's ready to pour."

The mold should be warm before pouring jigheads. This is accomplished by making the first couple of pours into a mold without hooks.

When filling a multi-cavity mold, I prefer to hold it at a slight angle with the hinge end resting on the table. Rather than attempting to fill each cavity one at a time, I begin with the gate nearest the hinge and continue filling all cavities in one smooth pass.

Be sure to wear heavy-duty work gloves when holding molds that are accepting lead. Also, the hinge pins on the mold requires oiling every few runs to keep them working smoothly.

## Art of painting

After the molded lead has cooled and before a body is tied to the hook shank, jigheads should be painted. Most tackle crafters opt for a painted head to match the particular color

scheme of the jig pattern they plan to tie.

"It's important to get a base coat of paint on the leadheads as soon as possible," says Hornstein. "Unpainted lead begins to oxidize quickly. When that happens, paint does not adhere to the metal very well. I like to get two coats of a white primer on leadheads right away. Then at my leisure I can apply two or three finish coats.

"Again, when painting I have an opportunity to customize the heads with various shades or color intensities, pearlized overcoats, two-tone coats, or I even add eyes. For drying, I simply lay old arrow shafts across a cardboard box and hang the jigs on the arrows. The inside of the box catches any drips."

Hornstein uses vinyl jig paint, which he brushes on. Although brushing is time-consuming, dipping jigheads into liquid paint results in heavy-duty dripping.

Al Claypoole prefers to spray jigheads, claiming it is the fastest and quickest drying way of dealing with large numbers of heads.

"Although I have not yet tried it, there is a new powder paint on the market that promises to offer a quality one-step, one-coat painting process," Claypoole says. "Jigheads are pre-heated to 350 degrees in the oven and then dipped in the jar of powder paint. The powder adheres to the hot head, and melts to form a hard shell. Knock off the excess and you are done!"

## Body and soul

Once painted, a portion of my molded jigheads is reserved for use with soft-plastic grubs. Years ago I tried my hand at molding plastic worms and grubs, but the consistency and texture of the finished product was very poor, so I buy all my soft plastic.

However, another portion of my leadheads is sent to the tying table. Leadheads with bodies of natural feathers, fur or hair are classic jigs. Hand-tied jigs have a soul that stick-on plastic grubs never achieve.

The particular materials selected for jig bodies vary based on the desired finished product. Years ago I created jigs with details that made them look like crayfish or specific baitfish. However, those jigs required considerable time to tie. Later at the lake or river after a half-dozen casts, the jig would be snagged and lost. Soon I was reluctant to tie on a fancy jig for fear of losing it. Today I tie simple, quick patterns, yet they are as effective as the more complicated patterns.

Straight bucktails (white or dyed) are great for springtime striper and wintertime walleyes. I also tie bear hair jigs that I tip with small pork rind to create the classic fly-and-rind for smallmouths. But my favorite and most productive hand-tied baits are marabou jigs from 1/16-ounce to 1/4-ounce. Some are entirely marabou, while others are a combination of marabou, Krystal Hair and tinsel chenille. An undulating marabou jig catches any fish that swims.

Besides body material, a few basic fly-tying tools are needed. An economy fly vise that can hold hooks from size 10 to 2/0 can be purchased for less than \$30. Other required items include a fly-tying bobbin to hold the thread, fly thread in size 3/0 or nylon rod thread in size A, a pair of fly-tying scissors (small sewing scissors work), a utility knife or razor blade, and a jar of head cement or clear fingernail lacquer.



Tying a simple hair or marabou plume jig is not difficult. Once you master the basics, more complicated patterns fall into line quickly.

With the bend of the hook secured in the vise, wrap the thread several times around the tying collar of the jig. After several turns, wrap the thread back over the previous wraps, thereby tying the thread down with the overwraps. Do not attach thread to the hook with a knot or with glue.

Allow the bobbin to dangle below the vise. This keeps necessary tension on the thread while you cut off the tag end and prepare the hair or feather.

Cut a small bunch of deer or bear hair close to the skin and trim to the proper length. With marabou, pull tufts from the stem of the feather. A general guideline is to have the tail extend past the hook bend about 1 1/2 times the length of the hook shank. Marabou, however, is often tied with shorter tails.

Hold the hair or marabou against the tying collar with your thumb and forefinger of the left hand, while the right hand holds the bobbin and wraps the thread over the tag end of the body material. Use small bunches of hair and tie each down tightly in place around the collar. When the desired amount of hair or marabou is in place, wrap several layers of thread tightly over the collar and secure the thread with two half-hitches.

Trim the excess material forward of the collar. Then add several drops of head cement or fingernail polish to prevent the thread from unwinding. Finally, trim the thread close to the wraps and you have a finished jig!

For some patterns, the tying begins on the shank of the hook near the bend, such as when adding a tail of Krystal Hair. When building layered bodies, always work from the rear of the hook to the head of the jig. With a little practice, you will be on your way to creating your own patterns.



## Safety Precautions

"Tackle crafters must be aware that lead is potentially dangerous in a molten state and is toxic even in a solid state if taken internally," says Al Claypoole. "However, when safety precautions are followed, the danger is minimal."

When molding leadheads, Al Claypoole recommends the following:

1. Never handle food when handling lead. Always wash your hands thoroughly and repeatedly after working with lead.
2. Keep the work area clear so nothing can possibly fall into the molten lead. Never have other liquids near molten lead. One drop of water or soft drink splashed into molten lead can cause a small explosion resulting in molten lead flying everywhere.
3. Wear safety glasses or goggles.
4. Use leather gloves for holding molds. Long sleeves and a sturdy work apron are also recommended.
5. Keep necessary tools handy, but not where you must reach across the lead pot or furnace.
6. Most important: Work in an adequately ventilated area. Breathing molten lead fumes is dangerous. Have an exhaust fan running anytime you are melting lead. If the room does not have a built-in exhaust fan, use a table fan. Do not direct the fan at the lead melting pot, but angled at the wall or ceiling.—DB.



## The Ed Gray Special

Dave Hornstein and I tie one jig that we refer to as the Ed Gray Special, in memory of the friend who taught us a lot about fishing jigs. During the last decade of his life, this was the only jig Ed fished. Using sizes 1/16-ounce and 1/8-ounce, he caught just about every species of fish in western Pennsylvania—including walleyes as large as 14 pounds.

Since mentioning this jig in a couple of articles, I have had requests on how to construct it. Here are the details:

1. Lock the jig in the vise by the bend of the hook. In this instance I am using a 1/8-ounce jig with the barb on the collar flattened with pliers.
2. Secure the thread to the shank of the hook behind the tying collar.
3. Cut the tag end of the thread, and then secure several strands of Krystal Hair to the shank.
4. Begin attaching small tufts of white marabou plumes, securing each tuft with two to three wraps of thread.
5. Place marabou tufts on each side, the top and the bottom of the hook shank.
6. Secure the end of a piece of tinsel chenille with the thread on the shank. Wrap the thread forward to behind the jighead.
7. Wrap the tinsel along the shank and onto the tying collar, and secure with three wraps of thread behind the jighead.
8. Trim the tinsel with a razor blade.
9. Wrap several layers of thread immediately behind the jighead and secure with two or three half-hitches.
10. Apply several drops of clear fingernail polish to the wrapping and cut the thread. Go fish.—DB.





# Northeast Corner Trout Lakes

by Mike Bleech

In the northeast corner of the state, north of I-84 and east of I-81, Pennsylvania anglers enjoy some of the finest ice fishing for trout in the Mid-Atlantic Region. Ice anglers come here not just from Pennsylvania, but from New York, New Jersey and other states to lakes that are generously stocked for the winter season, and some lakes that are inhabited by trophy-size holdover trout.

The I-81 x I-84 corner is a high, hilly region comprising most of Wayne County, eastern Susquehanna County, the northeast corner of Lackawanna County and the northern part of Pike County. Though often referred to as part of the Poconos, it is actually north of the Pocono Mountains. Most of the region is rolling hills left by Ice Age glaciers, except for a finger of the Appalachian Mountains that extends from Scranton to the area where Wayne, Lackawanna and Susquehanna counties meet. The highest land is over 2,000 feet elevation, along the westcentral border of Wayne County. The lowest is barely above sea level along the Delaware River that separates Pennsylvania from New York and New Jersey.

The I-81 x I-84 corner contains a disproportionately large number of the lakes and ponds compared to the rest of the state. Unfortunately for most anglers, many of the lakes and ponds are completely ringed by private land. A few, though, have Fish and Boat Commission access areas, and some among these are stocked with trout for the ice fishing season—Long Pond, Upper Woods Pond, Merli-Sarnoski Lake and Fairview Lake. Also worthy of men-



Worth Hammond with a brook trout caught through the ice

tion to ice anglers are a couple that are stocked during other seasons, and are inhabited by large hold-over trout—Duck Harbor Pond and Chapman Lake.

Climate also plays a large role in the ice fishing picture. This is some of the coldest land in the state, with a mean annual temperature of about 46 degrees. The smaller, more shallow lakes in this region are among the first to freeze in Pennsylvania.

## Fairview Lake

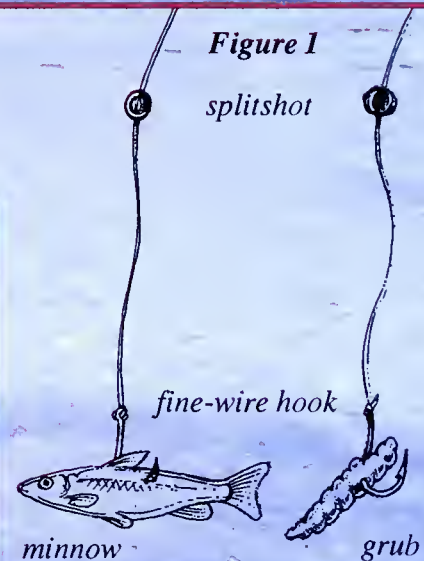
"We always manage to make a few trips up here for the winter trout season," says Larry Souders. Souders and his fishing partner, Harry Yerkes, said there was no ice on the lakes near their homes at Cooperstown when we met on Fairview Lake last January 10. By contrast, where Souders and Yerkes drilled their holes there was a solid 5 inches of ice, though some of the lake was still open.





Trout use the entire water column from the bottom to just beneath the ice. Jigs are sometimes more effective than bait because they show trout color, flash and movement.

Figure 1  
splitshot



Ice arrived late last year. When I toured the I-81 x I-84 trout lakes during early January, most of these lakes still had at least patches of open water.

"We always did well right in here," Yerkes volunteered, "in four to six feet of water."

They fished close to the Fish and Boat Commission access, which is the only public access on the lake. Anglers scatter all over the lake when it is completely frozen. Many come for the trout, and some aim for yellow perch, bluegills or chain pickerel. Bass also inhabit the lake.

"They get some huge trout in here," Souders said, though the huge trout have so far eluded him and Yerkes. Their best from this lake has been about 14 inches.

Commission Fisheries Technician Daniel Bourke agreed. "It does have a pretty good holdover and maybe even reproducing trout population," he said. "It's got some pretty good trout in it."

Fairview Lake is located in southcentral



Figure 2  
splitshot

Many lakes in the I-84 x I-81 corner are privately owned, but a few have Commission access areas and some of these waterways are stocked with trout for winter action. These waterways include Long Pond, Upper Woods Pond, Merli-Sarnoski Lake and Fairview Lake. See page 27 for more details on winter stocking.



Pike County, just a couple of miles east of Lake Wallenpaupack. It covers 192 acres. Maximum depth is about 60 feet, according to Yerkes and Souders, near the center of the lake. It is stocked with mostly brown trout and rainbow trout.

## Chapman Lake

Another lake with trophy potential is Chapman Lake.

"Chapman certainly has the potential to hold some over," said Commission Area 4 Fisheries Manager Robert Moase.

Though not stocked for the ice fishing season, Chapman Lake has trout remaining from warm-weather plants. Access is limited by a complete circle of private land. As is typical for deeper lakes, it is relatively late in freezing over.

Chapman is a natural glacial lake. The surface area is 98 acres. Maximum depth is about 60 feet in a hole near the southern end of the lake. A hump near the center of the lake comes up to 20 feet.



# Northeast Corner Trout Lakes

"They're out in the deeper water," advises Tom Zilelinski, a Dunmore angler who tests the local ice regularly.

Zilelinski suggested fathead minnows as the best bait, noting that his preferred ice fishing method is jigging.

In addition to trout,

Chapman Lake holds bass, bluegills, yellow perch and abundant chain pickerel.

## Merli-Sarnoski Park Lake

Formerly called Finch Hill Lake, the water from Merli-Sarnoski Park Lake was once piped down from the mountain on which it is situated to wash coal at Carbondale. Basically a natural lake, this 35-acre spring-fed waterway was enlarged somewhat for that purpose about a century ago. Now it is part of an 844-acre Lackawanna County park. Maximum depth is about 25 feet, though most of it is no more than 8 to 10 feet deep.

Note that the park is open daily from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. At other times the access road is blocked by a gate.

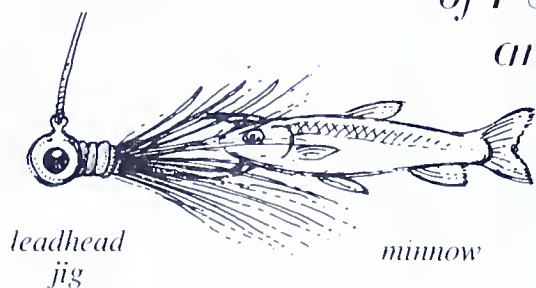
Fishing pressure is heavy on nice weekends.

Figure 3



jigging spoon

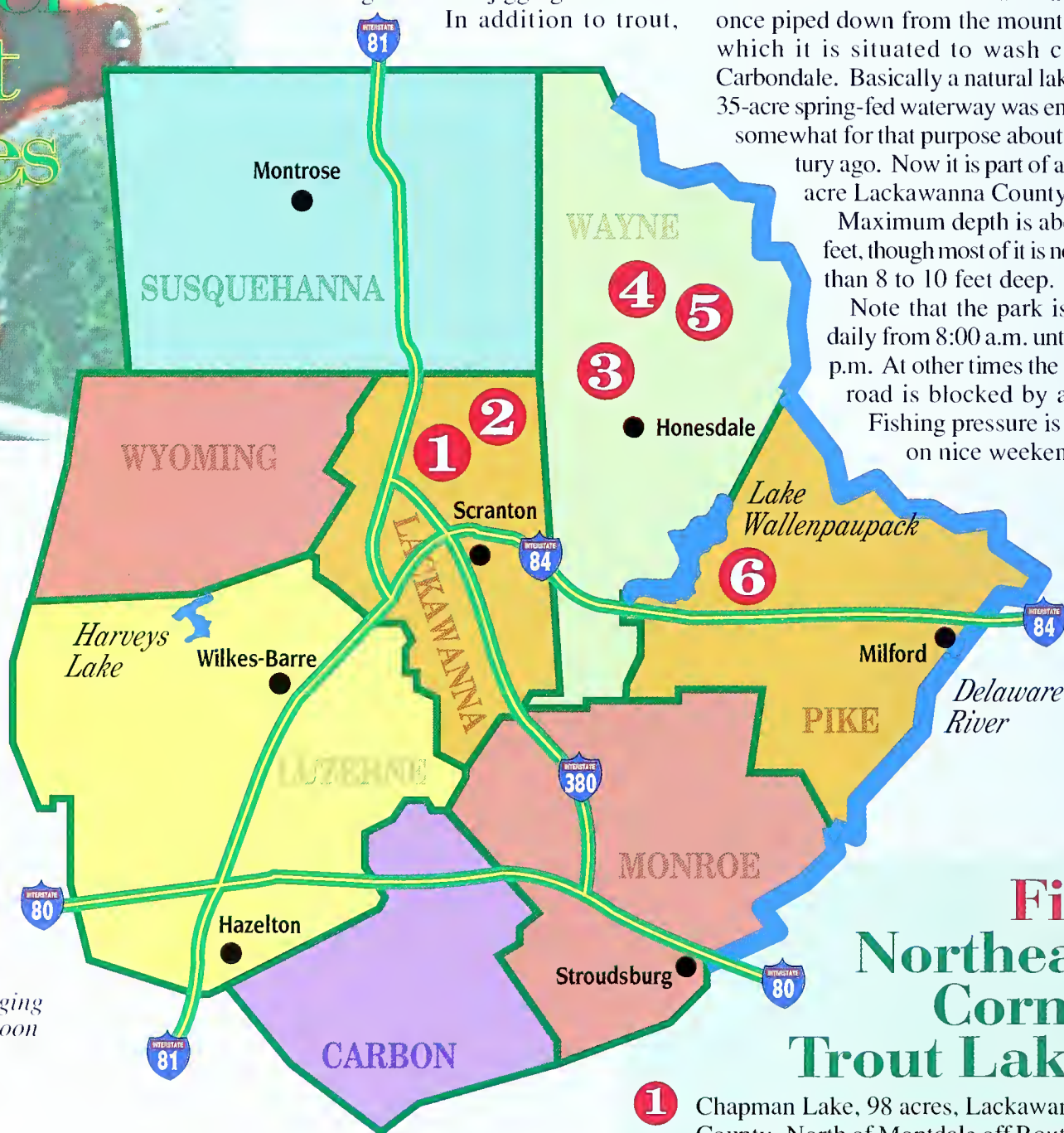
grub



leadhead jig

minnow

*In the northeast corner of the state, north of I-84 and east of I-81, Pennsylvania anglers enjoy some of the finest ice fishing for trout in the Mid-Atlantic Region.*



- 1** Chapman Lake, 98 acres, Lackawanna County. North of Montdale off Route 247.
- 2** Merli-Sarnoski Park Lake, 25 acres, Lackawanna County. Near Finch Hill.
- 3** Long Pond, 81 acres, Wayne County. Eight miles northwest of Honesdale, off Route 670.
- 4** Upper Woods Pond, 90 acres, Wayne County. Two miles north of Cold Springs Corners off Route 371.
- 5** Duck Harbor Pond, 121 acres, Wayne County. Between Rileyville and Lookout west of Route 191.
- 6** Fairview Lake, 195 acres, Pike County. Off Route 390 on Gumbletown Road.

## Five Northeast Corner Trout Lakes



"We're fished real heavy year-round," park employee James Spedding said. Merli-Sarnoski is so heavily fished because of its nearness to Scranton and Carbondale. It is located in the northeast corner of Lackawanna County.

According to Spedding, about 13,000 trout were stocked in this small lake last year. In addition to trout, largemouth bass, yellow perch, bluegills and chain pickerel inhabit this water.

"They get nice, big bass in here and nice, big pickerel," Tom Zilelinski, a frequent angler here, reported.

Merli-Sarnoski is a favorite place of Zilelinski because most of the shoreline is undeveloped. The only building is a beach house. Parts of the edges are bordered by cranberry bogs.

Though there was open water in the lake when I visited, it freezes sooner than most local lakes.

"Last winter we had over 30 inches of ice," Spedding recalled.

### Upper Woods Pond

"If you want to take kids and catch a lot of fish, go to Upper Woods Pond," suggests E.J. Prawdzik, owner of White's Crossing Sport Shop. An enthusiastic angler himself, Prawdzik stays well-informed about Wayne County lakes through his customers and a fishing contest he runs.

Upper Woods Pond is a glacial lake that has been enlarged to 80 acres by a small dam. Maximum depth near the center is about 75 feet. It is in the center of Wayne County, just a couple of miles north of Prompton State Park. Because it is on state game lands, it is more hospitable to anglers than most lakes or ponds in this part of the state.

"The best bait is wax worms," Prawdzik advised. "A small jig with wax worms."

Prawdzik suggested ice fishing to the left from the boat launch area. "That's where I go, and I always catch fish—the whole left side," he said.

Once known for big browns, a recent Fish and Boat Commission survey did not reveal any such trophies. Though a few panfish and alewives live in Upper Woods Pond, trout and kokanee salmon are the main inhabitants. Stocking, both catchable size and fingerlings, consists mostly of rainbow trout, along with a few browns.

A kokanee stocking program was discontinued in 1990, but they will remain a part of the catch for a few years. They have not been popular with anglers. Most are caught by accident.

"Not a lot of people know that it has lake trout," Prawdzik said.

He suggested fishing for lake trout near the bottom in the deepest water early during the ice fishing season. Then move shallower, still fishing near bottom, as winter wears on and there is less oxygen in the deeper water. They can be located with a sonar/fish finder.

"There has to be monsters," he said. The biggest he has seen were about 12 pounds.

For bait he suggests sawbellies and white bucktails. (Alewives are often called sawbellies, because they have saw-like, though not sharp, lower edges.) Large Swedish Pimples are also excellent, especially when tipped with a strip of sawbelly.

### Long Pond

Long Pond is an 81-acre manmade impoundment in northcentral Wayne County. Its maximum depth is about 25 feet. Mostly surrounded by private land, there is a Fish and Boat Commission access. The side opposite the public access is lined with cottages. That side is still called Lake Aldred, the former name of this body of water.

E.J. Prawdzik described it as "an all-around lake."

It is stocked with rainbow trout. Chain pickerel, bass, walleyes, yellow perch and bluegills also contribute to the catch. The forage base includes alewives and shiners.

"They do a lot with scented baits over there," Prawdzik said.

### Duck Harbor Pond

Removed from the catchable-size trout stocking list along with other lakes over 200 surface acres in size, Duck Harbor Pond, 228 acres, is again being stocked with both catchable and fingerling brown trout and rainbow trout with the hope of providing a year-round fishery with holdovers.

Part of the management plan includes special regulations. Anglers may keep only two trout per day. The minimum size for trout is 14 inches.

"It's a two-story lake. It holds warmwater and coldwater fishes," says Fisheries Technician Daniel Bourke. "A two-story lake provides thermal refuge."

During the hot weeks of summer trout find suitably cool water in the depths, which extend to 60 feet. It has a deep-water forage base of alewives.

Prawdzik suggested ice fishing in the flat near the center of the lake. Deep holes drop on either side of this flat.

In addition to trout, ice anglers are liable to catch walleyes.

"This is probably the best walleye lake in this area," according to Prawdzik.

Like most area lakes, Duck Harbor Pond is surrounded by private land. However, there is a Fish and Boat Commission access. A depression in front of this access is about 30 feet deep.

Prawdzik called ice fishing at Duck Harbor Pond "tough!"



## Tactics for Northeast Corner Trout

Trout are coldwater fish, so they are active under the ice. When they are hungry, they feed aggressively. Even when they are not in an aggressive mood, they can sometimes be coaxed into taking a lure or bait. Often the only difference between a good day of fishing and getting skunked is the right lure or bait, so experiment if you are not getting hits.

Trout use the entire water column, from the bottom to just beneath the ice. You can use a sonar/fish finder to determine the depth where most of the trout are, but when trout are aggressive they are probably using various depths. When you are jigging, frequently vary the depth of the jig. The exception to this, to some degree, is lake trout, which are most often close to the bottom.

A simple bait rig used either with an ice rod or a tip-up consists of a fine-wire hook and a small splitshot. Hook minnows either through the lips or lightly near the dorsal fin. Grubs such as maggots, wax worms and mealworms should be hooked near the rear. (See Figure 1.)

Generally, grubs are the better bait for rainbow trout. Lake trout, brown trout and brook trout often prefer lively minnows. All of these trout species rely to a large extent on their sense of smell.

Other baits can be used with this same basic rig. The exception is the putty-like scented baits. For these use a small treble hook because it holds the bait better than a single hook. (See Figure 2.)

Jigs are sometimes more effective than bait. They show trout color, flash and movement, and they can be used with bait for the best of both worlds. Various commercial scents sometimes produce even better results than bait. (See Figure 3.)

—MB.



# On the Water

with Carl Richardson

## The Wish Book

As a kid, a sure sign of the approach of Christmas was the arrival of the Sears Christmas catalog. Called the "Wish Book," this catalog was loaded with the latest in toys and other things sure to make a Christmas list swell. In typical Madison Avenue fashion, it appeared on the doorstep early enough to let me look at it often. From the time it arrived until Christmas, I sat cross-legged on the floor and scanned every page and made my "wish list." I considered all the stuff I wanted from the dogeared pages and made my list for Santa. Sometimes the items would show up on Christmas morning, more often, not. My parents were not real sure about this obsession, since they were raised in a different time. They figured that since I wasn't shattered or disappointed come Christmas morning, no harm was done.

With Sears out of the catalog business and my sole interest fishing, I am "forced" to glean the pages of the truckload of fishing catalogs that show up each week. It seems that the folks at Cabela's, Bass Pro Shop and Orvis went to the same school that Sears did. Make the items in your catalogs seductively appealing and bombard your customers with catalog after catalog.

Unlike my Sears Wish Book habit, this new catalog habit is not just reserved for the weeks before Christmas. I constantly review each page of every catalog and add items to my new wish list. This habit gets real bad around Christmas, a throw-back to my younger days and the Sears catalog. These catalogs have become my grown-up version of the Wish Book.

Like most of you reading the pages of this magazine, I have more than my share of stuff. But as any catalog shopper will admit, you can't have too much stuff. I'm no sucker for all the latest techno-garbage, but who couldn't use another new stick or the latest in five ball-bearing ultralight long-cast reel? Those new 2mm neoprene waders look like the ticket for summer trout fishing. That huge tackle box and accessory boxes are exactly what I need. The latest and greatest stuff, that's what I need.

I had (emphasis on had) a fishing friend who always seemed to have all the latest and neatest stuff. After some intense questioning how he bought all this stuff, he confessed. He said that after receiving so many useless gifts from family and friends, he made a Christmas list and distributed it to those close to his heart. He admitted it was like the technique he used as a kid, with a new wrinkle.

To make sure he got exactly what he wanted, he marked things in his favorite catalogs and passed them on. He felt this guaranteed that the new rod he got was the one he saw in the catalog. He added that he rarely had to exchange gifts with this technique. His plan worked, as his relatives showered him each Christmas (and birthdays, he added) with fishing tackle and accessories.

I love my wife and her family dearly, but they aren't a fishing family. Practical gifts like clothes were the norm in her house, not fun stuff like rods and tip-ups. Since I have been

part of her family I have received some great ties and swell sweaters for Christmas. Lucky for me these folks have great taste in clothes.

A couple of years ago, frustrated by the lack of fishing stuff under the tree, I decided to use Tom's strategy. I took a couple of the catalogs that weren't too worn out and highlighted some of the things I might like to add to my collection. Time was running out, but like most, my mother-in-law had put off her Christmas shopping. I do a lot of traveling and sometimes I get to fish on these trips. One well-worn catalog had this nifty all-in-one fly rod and reel case. Recognizing an opportunity, I passed it on to my mother-in-law. Assisted by the 1-800 number, her credit card and Federal Express, the case arrived on her doorstep.

About the same time, my wife was puzzled about what to get me. *Wham*, one look at the catalog I showed her and the UPS man is bringing this great ultralight spinning rod. By the way, the stick is great and I have landed a ton of smallmouths on it, and the case goes everywhere with me.

The next two years met with similar results. One year I thought I could use a new fly tying vise, the following year a new fly reel. Each Christmas I circled the model I would buy for myself, if I were the greedy sort, and passed the catalog on to the appropriate parties. I worked on my timing so I could save them the extra shipping costs involved with overnight delivery. You will be happy to know that the vise works great and the reel is everything I thought it would be. Tom was a genius! Not only could he catch fish when others couldn't, but he did it with stuff his mother-in-law bought! This could mean a Nobel prize or something.

I'm real excited about the arrival of the holidays this year. I planned my strategy out well in advance. The catalog companies have my mother-in-law in their computers, so her end tables are stacked with her own catalogs. You know how those places are—send in an order and get a truckload of catalogs for the rest of your life. Beginning around Labor Day this year I started making marks on the pages in her catalogs. I hit paydirt on Thanksgiving. After eating my fill of her incredible turkey dinner and helping with the dishes, I plopped down in front of a football game. I picked up my favorite catalog and made some comments about a certain item on its pages. She nibbled on the bait and suggested that maybe Santa Claus would bring it for me!

This is great. Here I am, some 30 years after seeing my first "Wish Book," and the approach still works. The only difference is that instead of finding a Johnny Unitas football uniform under the tree, I find fishing stuff. I am worried about this year, though—how will my mother-in-law get that bass boat under the tree?





*Delaware River north of Stroudsburg*

# Pennsylvania ANGLER

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compiled by Charlene Seifert*

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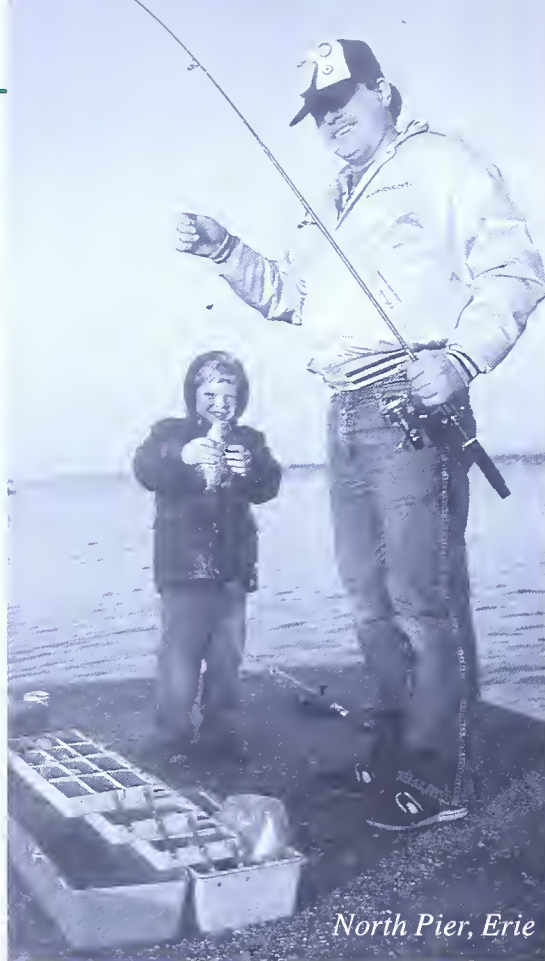
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# Mid-Winter Blue-Winged OLIVES

by Charles R. Meck



*Where can you find good hatches of little blue-wings?  
Two of the best streams with good populations are  
Yellow Creek in Bedford County and  
Falling Spring near Chambersburg.*

Late winter—a terrible time to think about fly fishing, and especially matching a hatch. But guess what happened to Bruce Matolyak one late-winter afternoon a few years ago? On that late February afternoon Bruce had already caught as nice a trout as he would all season long—and guess what—he caught it on a dry fly. To make the event even more remarkable, Bruce caught the streambred brown trout on a size 20 imitation—in late winter when nobody else would think of matching a hatch. Here's what happened.

"What a day we had—we caught a half-dozen trout matching a hatch in mid-February. It'll always be one of the most memorable days of my fly fishing years." That's how Bruce Matolyak of Lemont talks about the first time he ever met a little blue-winged olive dun hatch in late winter. For Bruce and many other fly fishers it happens on the first warm day of the year. Temperatures that late February rose into the high 60s and Bruce felt the urge to fly fish.

As Bruce and Alex Black approached central Pennsylvania's Spring Creek, they noticed a few trout rising along a far bank. Bruce waded across the stream to investigate what brought these early season trout to the surface, and he found a respectable hatch of little blue-wings emerging along the far side. He noted one particularly heavy riser and cast his size 20 Little Blue-Winged Olive just two feet above it. The trout sucked in that little olive pattern on the second cast. A few minutes later Bruce released a heavy 18-inch wild brown trout. That warm February day Bruce landed a half-dozen trout on dry flies before the hatch ended.

What an exciting way to begin the season! Fishing over trout rising to the first mayfly hatch of the season—fishing over rising trout when most other Keystone anglers don't even think of fly fishing.



The same type of event happened to me more than two decades ago again on a bright relatively warm late-February afternoon. I hiked along the upper end of Spring Creek in central Pennsylvania in 50-degree weather and found small mayflies emerging along the shoreline. I stood at a large, swirling eddy and saw dozens of small, grayish-olive dazed duns being picked off by an early season rising trout. I picked up one of the duns and recognized it as a little blue-winged olive dun.

Anglers copy this hatch with a size 18 or 20 pattern by the same name.

Several years after the incident on Spring Creek I again met a hatch of little blue-winged olives—this time on the Little Juniata River and this time a few weeks later. The hatch first appeared shortly after noon in mid-March, and a pod of a dozen or so trout keyed in on the floating duns. I tied on a size 20 Little Blue-Winged Olive Dun to match the hatch. Those rising trout that afternoon seemed eager to take anything that looked like a mayfly.

You often find little blue-winged olives emerging with other mayflies. On Fishing Creek in Clinton County I've seen four mayflies appear in one afternoon in April. Little blue-winged olives often appear first or near noon, followed by blue quills, quill gordons and finally hendricksons. When several hatches appear it's extremely important to take time and see which insect trout are taking. During these early April hatches, I've changed patterns three and four times before I began to catch trout. I remember vividly many times fishing multiple early season hatches on Fishing Creek. On many of those late-winter and early spring days I've had to change patterns several times to keep up with the feeding trout. Invariably the little

blue-wing olive appears first in the parade of hatches on that limestone stream.

What in the world are these small insects doing appearing at this time of the year? Maybe you thought mayflies only

late February and early March. If you fly fish in late winter or spring on an overcast drizzly day, you can often see little blue-wings emerging. On these inclement days these small mayflies are often unable to take flight. Especially on these days they make easy prey for feeding trout. On many of these early season excursions I expect to see hendricksons, blue quills and quill gordons, but instead I've fished over a great hatch of little olives.

Hatches of little blue-wings usually appear at the most comfortable time of day, so you'll probably see hatches in late winter and early spring from noon to 4:00 p.m.

### Miserable day?

I said earlier that if you add a miserable day to the picture in late winter and early spring, you're even more likely to see the hatch. I'll never forget a fishing trip to Oswayo Creek in April with Paul

Antolosky of Bellefonte. Paul prepared for the trip with plenty of Blue Quills, Hendricksons and Little Blue-Winged Olive patterns. The day we arrived on the stream north of Coudersport we hit one of those typically cold, early spring days. The leaden-gray sky spewed forth a fine mist. Paul and I sat by a slower section of the stream for almost an hour waiting and hoping something would

happen. In that entire time we didn't see one trout rise or one insect emerge.

We decided to head upstream to a section with more riffled water, and here a great fishing day unfolded in front of us. As we arrived at the first riffle, Paul pointed to a half-dozen trout feeding on insects. Blue quills and little blue-winged olives made up the bulk of the food these trout

*You'll also find a good hatch of little blue-wings on the Little Lehigh in Allentown. The Little Lehigh holds sporadic late-February afternoon hatches on several occasions. Here trout commonly feed on little blue-wings in late fall, late winter and early spring.*

appeared in late spring and early summer. Mayflies appear on Keystone streams just about every month of the year. I've witnessed fishable hatches in December, February and March. If you see a small, upright-winged mayfly on the water at this time of the winter, you can be fairly certain it's a member of the little blue-winged olive genus (*Baetis*). Little blue-winged olives appear twice a year—once in the fall and another time in the spring. Most



*Parachute Little Blue-Winged Olive Dun*

often you'll find them emerging from March through May and again from September through October. But on unseasonably mild winter afternoons, you sometimes see hatches, especially on some of our better limestone streams. I've hit great little blue-winged olive hatches on many early season trips into late April and early May. But I've also hit hatches in





*Spring Creek, Centre County*

fed on. As we glanced upstream through several other sets of riffles and pools, we could see other trout rising to this early season bonanza. We ended up that day with more than 20 trout taking a combination of Blue Quills, Hendricksons and Little Blue-Winged Olive patterns.

### Small mountain streams

Don't ever overlook little blue-winged hatches even on small mountain streams. I remember two such early season hatches vividly. Jack Mickiewicz and I fly fished early season on Ninemile Run near Galeton one afternoon. Ninemile flows downstream and becomes Pine Creek below. That cool afternoon Jack and I fished over dozens of small-stream trout rising to a little blue-winged olive hatch. Pool after pool on Ninemile Run held plenty of emerging duns, and each held several rising trout.

More recently Craig Josephson of Muskegon, Michigan, and Don Dunbar of Frederick, Maryland, fly fished one cold early spring day on a small, fertile southwest Pennsylvania stream. Here they saw trout feeding on little blue-wings all af-

ternoon. They matched the hatch with a size 20 pattern and caught trout. A week later I hit the same small stream with the same results. I used an emerger pattern tied in tandem with a larger dry fly.

Central Pennsylvania boasts some unusual small mountain streams, especially around State College. Some of these streams flow several miles through forest, and when they hit limestone they

disappear underground into a sinkhole. On these small, isolated mountain runs I have encountered many little blue-wings emerging.

How can you quickly identify the little blue-winged olive dun? If you see one you'll note the olive-gray body of this small mayfly. All members of this species (*Baetis tricaudatus*) have two tails, and if you watch the mayfly carefully you'll note that it constantly twitches the rear of its abdomen from side to side when at rest.

### Where to fish

Where can you find good hatches of little blue-wings? Many of our southern limestone streams hold hatches in late winter. Two of the best streams with good populations are Yellow Creek in Bedford County and Falling Spring near Chambersburg. Greg Hoover, an entomologist with Penn State University, claims that Yellow Creek near Bedford has an extremely heavy population of little blue-wings.

You'll also find a good hatch of little blue-wings on the Little Lehigh in Allentown. The Little Lehigh holds sporadic late-February afternoon hatches on several occasions.



*Mayflies appear on Keystone streams just about every month of the year. I've witnessed fishable hatches in December, February and March.*

*Little blue-winged olive dun*



# Mid-Winter Blue-Winged OLIVES

Here trout commonly feed on little blue-wings in late fall, late winter and early spring.

It's not uncommon to find little blue wings on small, fertile mountain streams or on large limestone streams and rivers. The Little Juniata River, and Spring and lower Bald Eagle creeks in central Pennsylvania, hold good populations, as does the Yellow Breeches in southcentral Pennsylvania.

I mentioned earlier that Fishing Creek near Lock Haven holds a fishable hatch of little blue-wings. This stream is so fertile that from mid-March through much of April you can expect to encounter all the major mayfly hatches, including the little blue-wing. In fact, you'll find several *Baetis* species appearing at that time, and all of them can be copied adequately with a size 20 Little Blue-Winged Olive Dun.

## Strategy

When looking for and fishing the hatch in midwinter, remember two important rules. First keep in mind that water temperatures probably average around 40 to 50 degrees—even colder on many free-stone streams. At that temperature trout aren't as active as they are with later hatches. Look for the hatch in relatively slow water where trout don't have to move quickly to take one of the duns. Cold water temperatures coupled with the size of the little blue-winged olives make rises to the hatch slow and deliberate. Spend some time on any fairly warm late-winter af-

ternoon looking for the hatch and for rising trout. Once you locate both, you can expect some extended fishing.

It's important to carry two patterns with you if you expect to hit a little blue-winged olive hatch. First, carry plenty of Little Blue-Winged dry flies in sizes 18 and 20. Gene Macri of Waynesboro says that the late-winter, early spring hatch on Falling Spring can often be matched with a size 16 or 18 pattern, but the fall hatch appears more often a bit smaller—usually a size 20 imitation copies this smaller one. When tying the dry fly I prefer using parachute-type dry flies. I tie the pattern with a pale-gray or white wing of poly yarn and a tail and hackle of dark gray. I dub olive-gray poly for the body.

Don't overlook the emerger pattern for this hatch. I tie the emerger on a size 18 nymph hook with a tail of dark dun hackle

fibers, a body made of dubbed gray muskrat fur dyed olive, and a wing pad and legs of dark-gray hackle. To obtain the proper results for the wing pad and legs, choose a large dark-dun hackle. Add some weight to the body before you tie the nymph so it sinks more readily.

I often tie the emerger on a tandem rig with a size 12 or 14 dry fly and the *Baetis* Emerger trailing a couple of feet behind it. If you hit a hatch of little blue-wings, you find trout especially susceptible to this rig.

Look for hatches on one of the many trout streams that have special regulations and let you fish throughout late winter. Look for the little mayfly on one of the state's fine limestone streams like Yellow Creek, the Little Lehigh or Falling Spring Branch. On these and many other fertile streams you find insects emerging and trout rising—even in late winter and early

spring. If you hit one of those first warm days of the year in late February or early March or maybe even now, be prepared with a good selection of Little Blue-Winged Olives and some wintertime action.



Some Pennsylvania Streams with  
Little Blue-Winged Olive Dun Hatches

1. Spring Creek (Centre County)
2. Little Lehigh
3. Falling Spring Branch
4. Yellow Breeches
5. Little Juniata River
6. Penns Creek
7. Fishing Creek (Clinton County)
8. Yellow Creek
9. Lower Bald Eagle
10. Clover Creek



A man wearing a grey beanie, a dark jacket with a fire department patch, and jeans is standing on a snowy bank. He is holding a long, thin fish (likely a yellow perch) by its tail. In the background, there are bare trees and a body of water. The title "Innovative ICE FISHING" is overlaid on the image.

# Innovative ICE FISHING

by Glenn Saffir

"Do you have the eggs?" I asked Jerry, as he packed his ice-fishing gear into my 4WD station wagon.

"You bet," he replied with a smile. "All crinkled and ready to go."

Crinkled, you ask. Sure, you may have had eggs scrambled, boiled, fried and poached. But crinkled?

What my companion was referring to were actually egg shells. He had pulverized a half-dozen into tiny flakes, then stored them in a sealed plastic sandwich bag. Those tiny egg-shell particles could play a significant role in the success we hoped for during our afternoon of ice fishing on a 50-acre pond not far from the Wayne County portion of the Delaware River.

In fact, through the years, my fishing companions and I have discovered that covering the basics may not always be enough. Although it is important to have properly rigged tipups and jigging combos, lively bait and time-proven lures, and a sharp auger and well-placed holes, sometimes it takes those little innovations to make the difference between a cold day of fishing and a hot one. Here's how you can heat up your fish-catching through the ice.

## Make your location inviting to the fish

After you've cut your holes, what do you do? Typically, ice fishermen lower minnows on tipups or use a short rod to work lures or live bait. When you think about it, even if you've got lines in your legal limit of holes, you are not reaching much water. Unlike open-water situations, where you can test a large area with a single retrieve and cover wide expanses with a few well-targeted casts or by trolling, an offering lowered through a hole has little mobility.

If you can't readily reach out to wide-ranging fish with your bait, you can at least broadcast an invitation "to come and get it." In fact, that's where our egg shells come in. By occasionally dropping a small amount of tiny fragments through our hole, we send down attractors to our location that act as beacons in the dark winter world of ice-capped fish. This attractant is a natural, totally biodegradable

substance, so you are doing no harm to the environment—unless you consider lowering the fish population a detriment!

"Got one," Jerry yelled, as his tiny jigging rod bent like a divining rod toward the water within his ice hole. "A jig and eggs must be what they want for lunch," he joked.

Jerry had just lowered his tiny jig—a Swedish Pimple—to within two feet of the pond's bottom. Then he sprinkled a touch of egg shell. As the minute particles glittered their way through the depths, a potbellied yellow perch zeroed in and attacked the lure. The fish had received Jerry's invitation and had decided to accept.

You can enhance your bait and the surrounding water with commercially available products. In some cases, they may not have been devised with the ice fisherman in mind, but the challenge of coming up with innovative ice-fishing tactics is improvising. That's what I did when I was after yellow perch on another Delaware Valley pond.



# Innovative ICE FISHING

That day I decided to supplement the egg shells with a commercial formula meant to be applied to open-water lures. The concoction is a liquid formula in a plastic squeeze container. The instructions on the bottle read: "Apply...on any artificial lure or live bait to produce sufficient bubbles and bio-sound." I wasn't sure if it would catch fish, but it had caught me!

On that day, I tied on an old reliable ice-fishing lure, a Rapala jig. I'd fished it for a half-hour with nothing to show for my efforts. Then I squirted on the high-tech potion. I lowered the jig to just off the lake bottom and began my standard up-down jigging technique. The difference, however, was that within a couple of minutes my technique was interrupted by a solid hit, which quickly produced a chunky chain pickerel.

I have since not only fortified my artificial baits with this formula, but because the product is biodegradable, and only if your attractant is biodegradable should you consider doing this, I have frequently squirted some into the hole, where it slowly dissipates and sinks.

That product is now a staple in the pack basket I use to stow and carry my ice-fishing gear.

## Sweeten your bait

Although the advice imparted here is not meant to sound like a cookbook, we have already discussed a new way to serve eggs. Now let's look at ways to sweeten your bait.

Besides using the liquid formula to add attraction to my offerings, I have also tinkered with the scent-attractant liquids produced by a wide variety of manufacturers. If you have confidence in the effectiveness of attractants in open-water fishing, you will not be disappointed by their performance in winter waters.

FlowRite Fish Formula, Berkley Strike and Power Bait, Dr. Juice, Pete Rickard's Fish Scent, and Riverside Lures Real Craw are examples of the many "artificial sweeteners" you can use to enhance your bait.

For those who like their sweeteners to be all-natural, they may choose to enhance their bait with the eyes of the fish they are catching.

"That's the fish I wanted," yelled



*If you have confidence in the effectiveness  
of attractants in open-water fishing, you  
will not be disappointed by their  
performance in winter waters.*

Ed Feldmann as he quickly swung an 8-inch-long yellow perch to the ice.

"That first one," he continued, "is going to catch plenty more."

He then slipped the hooks of his jig from the panfish's lip, dispatched the fish, then with his knife carefully dug one of the perch's eyes out of its socket. He impaled the eye on the end of one of the lure's hook points, then lowered the bait. He had fortified an already effective lure with an additional attractant.

"Here's number two," Ed was soon calling out through a broad grin below his thick, gray mustache.

Throughout the day Ed was bringing chunky perch to the ice, continually replenishing the supply of his preferred sweetener. Ed had added a new meaning to the expression, "keep an eye out."

Similarly, strips of belly flesh from the fish you catch, just as in open-water trolling situations, may enhance the lure you are jigging—or serve as the sole bait to be jigged.

Of course, other natural sweeteners are available in bait shops. I prefer mousies, the larva of the syrphus fly. Mousies, wax worms, mealworms and similarly rugged larvae placed on the tip of any jig, add a meaty attraction that many fish find irresistible.

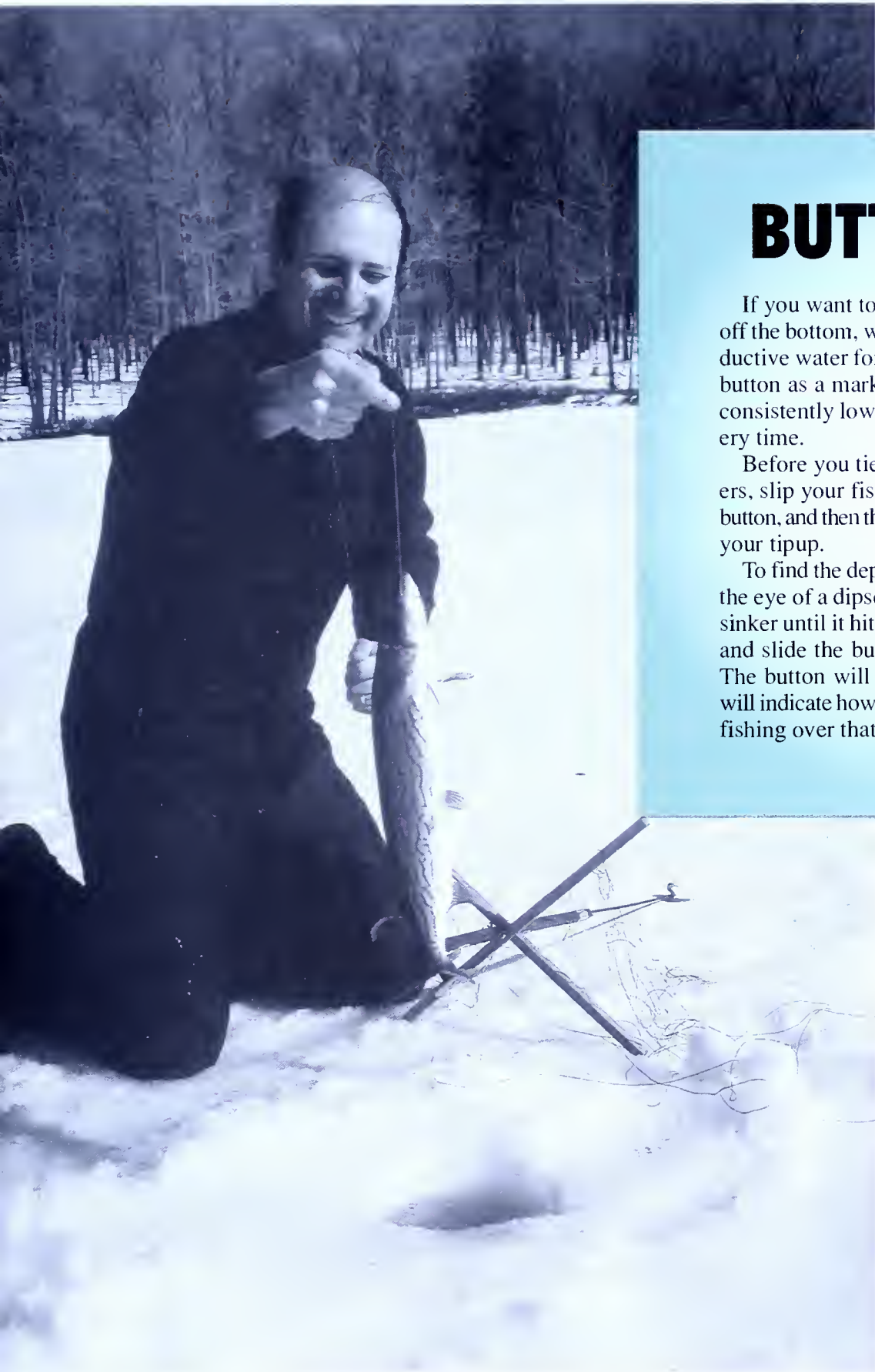
Don't be afraid to experiment with your own ingredients. If trophy rainbow trout fall for cheese and marshmallows, and carp and catfish are attracted to canned corn kernels, you can hardly be accused of being eccentric if you take inventory of the pantry with ice fishing in mind.

## Be open to new lures for ice fishing

When Ron Weber decided to introduce a Scandinavian lure to North American waters 35 years ago, the move was not greeted with fanfare. Today, however, anglers might wonder how many fewer fish they would have caught if Weber hadn't stuck his neck out by importing and distributing the Rapala.

So some 10 years ago when Weber asked Butch Furtman, a syndicated television fisherman, and me to field test a new jig popular in Finland, we relished the chance to try a Weber introduction. The lure, called a Pilkki, was, however, almost laugh-





## BUTTON *Up*

If you want to keep your offering a foot or two off the bottom, which often provides the most productive water for ice fishermen, use a shirt or coat button as a marker. It allows you to quickly and consistently lower your tipup to the same spot every time.

Before you tie on your hook and add any sinkers, slip your fishing line through one hole of the button, and then through the other. Now finish rigging your tipup.

To find the depth of the water you are over, place the eye of a dipsey sinker on your hook, lower the sinker until it hits the bottom, reel in a foot or two, and slide the button up to the reel of your tipup. The button will stay fixed until you move it and will indicate how much line you should let out when fishing over that hole!—GS.

*Strips of belly flesh from the fish you catch, just as in open-water trolling situations, may enhance the lure you are jigging—or serve as the sole bait to be jigged.*

able: a tiny minnow-shaped slab of metal, connected to its tiny hook by a fine chain.

We began my magazine-assigned tour of Greater Twin City, Minnesota, ice-fishing waters on an urban lake. The few ice fishermen nearby said they hadn't had any action. Discouraged before we even started, we cut some holes and began to jig with standard ice-fishing lures. Having the same poor luck as the fishermen who had preceded us, however, we both decided to tie on the untested, at least in American waters, Finnish jig.

"I got one," Furtman yelled through a frigid wind.

"I got one," I excitedly called, echoing Furtman's elation.

We showed each other twin crappies, and then continued to catch panfish while no other fishermen enjoyed any luck.

In that case, an opportunity to experiment was put on a silver platter for us. You shouldn't wait for such opportunities. Make them happen. Examine your tackle box and look at the lures you have accumulated for warmer-weather angling. Study tackle shops with an eye for experimentation. Yes, even look through the kitchen cabinets and the refrigerator for new baits. That's the recipe for innovative ice fishing.





Fishing Creek runs cool and deep as it winds its way past the old farmhouse that hasn't felt a painter's brush in 50 years. At this point the stream narrows a bit as it flows beneath an old covered bridge long out of use and ravaged by the passing of time. Now the creek picks up speed as it hurries along, leaving the open fields behind. It enters the coolness of the forest where it begins to slow until finally it comes to rest in a long, deep pool. In the middle of the pool a large rock splits the stream flow, forming two long feeding lanes where the trout that swim under its rock ledges find abundant cover and food delivered right to their doorstep.

Rhododendron graces the edges of the pool, their shiny green leaves pink with blossoms that are now in full bloom. Their overhanging branches provide shade and cover for the trout that lurk beneath them. The pool is also shaded from the sun by the hemlock and other trees that keep its waters cool during the summer. They also provide refuge for mayflies and other flying creatures.

It is the latter part of May and the weather has been perfect. The stream is in good condition with an adequate flow and water temperatures in the mid-60s. It is the season of the big flies and they have been hatching sporadically for the past few days. I am hoping that this evening will bring about a multitude of egg layers—big juicy morsels that tempt even the largest of trout.

In the meantime, I pass the time by recalling past years, experiences and by getting myself prepared mentally for their arrival. The time passes slowly and it seems like an eternity, but finally the evening shadows begin to fall and the sunlight starts to fade from the floor of the valley.

There is a stillness in the air that is hypnotic, as I make my way slowly through the pool and settle

# Green Drake Season

by Frank Sincavage

down next to the large rock on the side that forms the larger feeding lane. Here I will wait for their arrival. I am sure they will come this evening, but I still feel a twinge of apprehension. I have been sure other times and then disappointed because they failed to show. But this evening even though I haven't spotted a single one, somehow I can feel their presence. I just know they are up there, somewhere, waiting for a signal that will start them on their last flight. And so I wait—my eyes scanning the sky in sweet expectation.

Suddenly, as if by magic they appear, like a swarm of locusts. Their bodies rising and falling in tune with some silent symphony as their

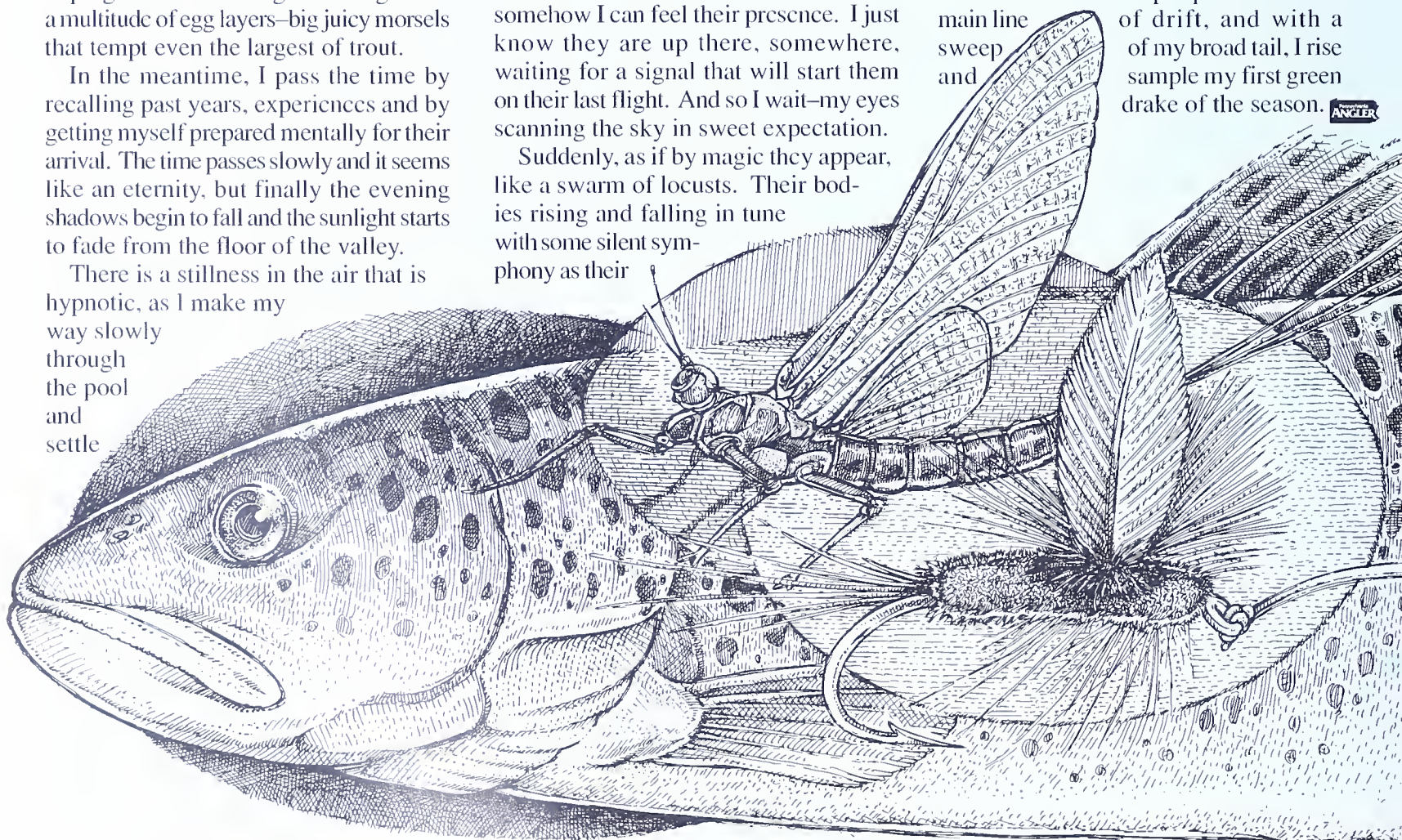
wings reflect the last rays of fading sunlight. Slowly they make their way down to the level of the stream where they fly back and forth. It is all over in a few minutes. The females continue their flight back and forth. As they prepare to unload their precious cargo, they seem to be searching for one special spot. Do they, like the salmon, have some built-in honing device that enables them to return to the same place in the pool where they began life? Finally, they touch down and deposit their eggs. Now they lie, spent, upon the water, their life cycle complete.

Soon the surface of the pool is littered with the bodies of the dead and dying, still and silent like a graveyard at dawn. But their dying is not in vain, for as they enter the last phase of their existence, the pool begins to come alive with feeding fish, as one after another the trout begin to partake of this glorious feast. First are the little bitty ones at the edge of the pool, slashing at the huge creatures they can barely get into their mouths. They are soon joined by the larger fish, which, having waited until the hatch was well under way, now leave their sanctuaries to join the feast.

All of this I have observed from my vantage point beside the large rock. At last the moment I have waited for has arrived. It is now that I move a few feet away from the rock and take up a position in the main line sweep and

of drift, and with a sample my first green drake of the season.

ANGLER





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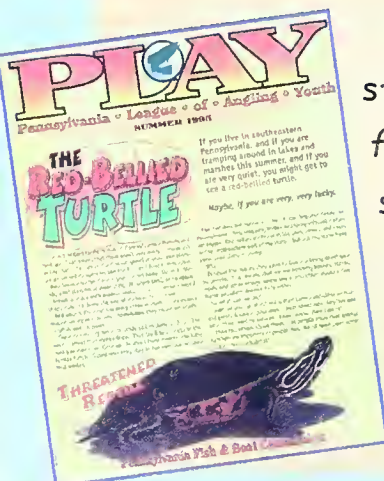
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# THE ROYAL WULFF

BY WALT YOUNG



Referring to anyone as a legend in his field is undoubtedly the highest form of praise. In the realm of fly fishing, however, calling Lee Wulff a legend almost seems inadequate. One of fly-fishing's best-known writers and photographers, he was also an accomplished cinematographer who produced some of the first outdoor films. A perpetual innovator of tackle and angling gear, Wulff is credited with designing such things as the first fishing vest, the rim-control fly reel, and the triangle taper fly line. A complete list of his angling accomplishments would easily fill this entire page.

In spite of a lifetime of contributions to the sport, the one that first comes to mind to anglers throughout the world when they think of Lee Wulff is the series of dry-fly patterns that bears his name. He tied the first "Wulff-style" fly in 1929. Until that time, most of the dry flies in common use were delicate creations, with wings and tails made from feather fibers. Wulff wanted a more durable design that presented a fuller appearance to the fish. To achieve the desired effect, he fashioned the wings and tail of his new fly, the pattern we now know as the Gray Wulff, from brown bucktail.

The new fly was an immediate success. Soon, Wulff added two other versions, the White Wulff and the Royal Wulff, to his arsenal. During this time, one of Wulff's friends and angling companions was Dan Bailey, another legend in his own right. It was Bailey who urged Wulff to name the hairwing-style flies after himself. Bailey moved to Livingston, Montana in the mid-1930s to open his now-famous fly shop. There, he added four more versions to the Wulff series, the Black, Brown, Blonde and Grizzly Wulffs. In subsequent years, Bailey did much to popularize the Wulff flies through his shop and mail order catalog.

I think I must own almost every fly pattern book that has been published in the last 40 years. Each lists from two or three to as many as 11 different Wulff patterns. Probably the most popular member of this distinguished family is the Royal Wulff. Considered an attractor type of fly because it surely looks like nothing in nature, the Royal Wulff, nonetheless, has taken its share of fish over the years. Its happy color scheme is intriguing even to those who don't fish, which might account for the Royal Wulff being chosen as the only dry fly ever to be depicted on a United States postage stamp.

Too many fly tiers avoid tying the Royal Wulff and its cousins because they find hairwings troublesome to construct. Even though hair is a little trickier to work with than a lot of other commonly used wing materials, it is not all that difficult, either. Most important, hairwings are exceptionally durable, making the time spent mastering the techniques to tie them a worthwhile investment.

White calftail is used for the wings on a Royal Wulff. A common mistake most tiers make when working with calftail is to use too much hair for the size fly they are tying. Calftail is fine-textured, reasonably stiff, and slightly crinkled. Its crinkled texture provides a fuller-looking wing with fewer fibers than would be required with a straighter kind of hair. Using more hair than necessary results in unwanted bulk on the hook shank and unnecessary difficulty in setting the wing upright.

If you clip a small bunch of hair from a calftail, you will notice that the length of the individual hair fibers varies tremendously. The real culprits are the numerous short fibers at the bottom of the bundle. They add bulk and contribute nothing to the wing silhouette. Eliminate them by holding the tips of the hairs between the thumb and forefinger of one hand and stroking them out with the thumb and forefinger of the other hand. It's even easier to clean them out with a few strokes of a fine comb, if you have one.

Once the useless shorter hairs are gone, the tips of the remaining hairs can be evened by using a small hair stacker. This all may sound like a lot of fussing, but it really only takes a few seconds. And doing so greatly simplifies the tying process and enhances the appearance of the finished wing.

Most Royal Wulffs you see in fly shops or pictured in tying manuals display a divided wing. I offer this to be an optional step. Lee Wulff himself tied his own Wulffs with a single, upright wing because this was how the mayflies he was trying to imitate carried theirs when on the water. In one of his last books, *Trout on a Fly*, he relates that he made his living as a freelance artist in the early 1930s. During those depression years, Wulff frequently supplemented his income by tying flies. Even though he knew his Wulff patterns worked just fine with a single upright wing, his customers expected to see two wings. So in those hard times, rather than not sell flies, it was, give the customer what they wanted—divided wings.

ANGLER



## Dressing

**Hook:** Standard dry-fly hook, sizes 8 to 16.

**Thread:** Black.

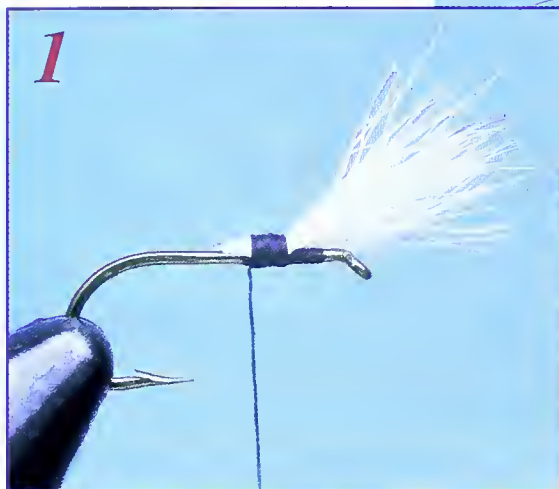
**Tail:** Brown bucktail.

**Wing:** White calftail or calf body hair.

**Body:** Two bands of peacock herl separated by a band of red floss.

**Hackle:** Brown.

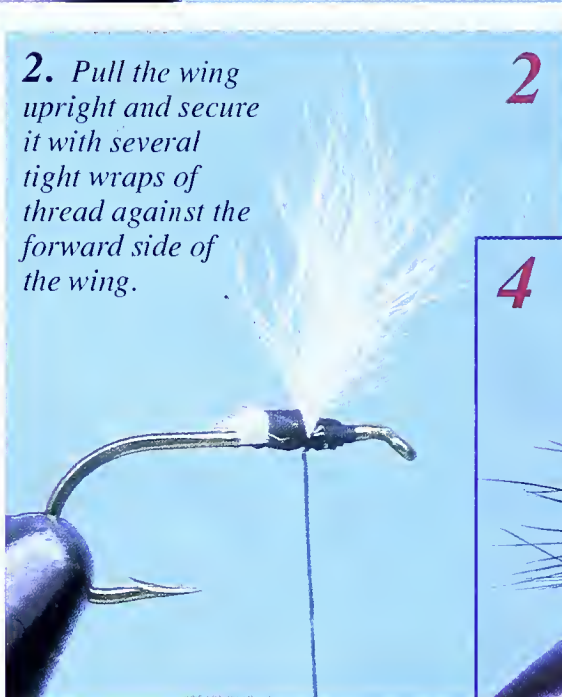
# THE ROYAL WULFF



**1.** Tie in a bundle of calftail for the wing with the tips of the hair pointing forward over the eye of the hook. Make sure the entire bunch is stacked on top of the hook and not off to either side of the hook shank. The wing should be about the same length as the hook shank. The tie-in point should be approximately one-fourth the shank length behind the hook eye. After the hair is bound in place, closely trim the butts of the hair to a neat taper.

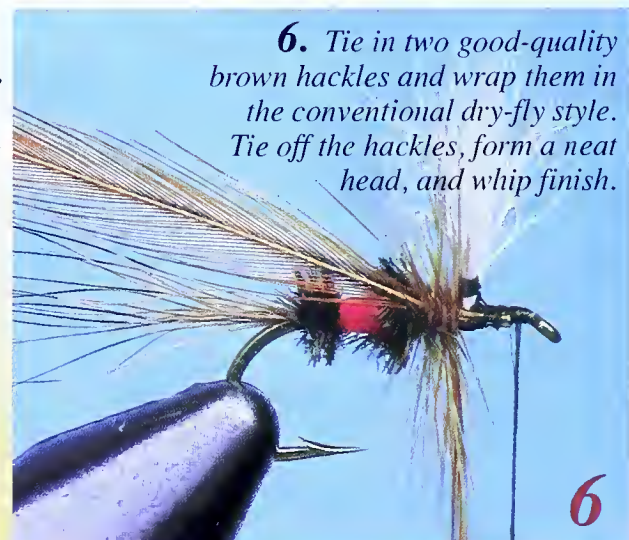


**2.** Pull the wing upright and secure it with several tight wraps of thread against the forward side of the wing.



**4.** Tie in a bunch of bucktail for the tail. The length of the tail should be about the same length as the hook shank. After the tail is tied in, wrap the hook shank with thread between the tail and wing to fill in any gaps and to form a smooth underbody, as shown.

**5.** Tie in the "Royal Coachman-style" body—a band of peacock herl, followed by a band of red floss, followed by another band of peacock herl. Make sure to leave space behind the wing for the hackle.



**6.** Tie in two good-quality brown hackles and wrap them in the conventional dry-fly style. Tie off the hackles, form a neat head, and whip finish.



## Winter Trout Stocking

More than 92,000 legal-sized trout are now being planted across the state as part of the Fish and Boat Commission's winter stocking program. These plantings of adult trout provide anglers with an expanded opportunity during late autumn and into the winter season.

The winter trout stocking began in November and will continue through December. Fifty-five lakes in 43 counties are included in the program. In all, 92,600 trout are set for release. And although most parts of the Commonwealth continue to experience low water levels, the winter stockings should come off on schedule because lakes have not been affected as severely as streams.

County	Waterway	Week of:
Allegheny	North Park Lake	November 13
Berks	Antietam Lake	December 4
Berks	Scotts Run Lake	December 4
Blair	Canoe Lake	December 18
Bucks	Lake Luxembourg	December 4
Bucks	Levittown Lake	December 4
Cambria	Duman Dam	December 18
Cambria	Lake Rowena	December 18
Cameron	George B. Stevenson Reservoir	December 18
Centre	Poe Lake	November 13
Clearfield	Parker Lake	November 6
Clinton	Kettle Creek Lake	December 18
Columbia	Briar Creek Lake	October 30
Cumberland	Laurel Lake	December 4
Cumberland	Opossum Creek Lake	December 4
Elk	Laurel Run Reservoir	December 11
Elk	Ridgway Reservoir	December 11
Erie	Lake Pleasant	December 4
Fayette	Dunlap Creek Lake	December 11
Fayette	Virgin Run Dam	December 18
Forest	Wards Ranch Pond	November 13
Franklin	Letterkenny Reservoir	December 4
Fulton	Cowans Gap Lake	December 4
Greene	Duke Lake	December 18
Huntingdon	Whipple Lake	December 18
Jefferson	Cloe Lake	December 11
Lackawanna	Merli Sarnoski Lake	November 6

Rainbow trout make up the bulk of the Commission's stockings, with 63,810 planned for release. An additional 20,270 brook trout and 8,520 brown trout are included.

All rules for the Extended Trout Season are in effect. All trout harvested must be a minimum of seven inches in length and no more than three salmonids (combined species) may be kept per day.

A complete list of lakes in the Winter Trout Stocking Program follows. Raccoon Lake, Beaver County, is traditionally stocked as part of the winter program, but it will not be stocked at this time because of a drawdown.

County	Waterway	Week of:
Lawrence	Cascade Quarry	December 4
Lebanon	Stovers Dam	December 4
Luzerne	Sylvan Lake	October 30
Lycoming	Little Pine Lake	December 18
McKean	Bradford Reservoir #3	December 18
Monroe	Tobyhanna Lake	November 6
Northampton	Minsi Lake	November 13
Perry	Allen Holman Lake	December 4
Pike	Fairview Lake	November 6
Potter	Lyman Lake	November 13
Schuylkill	Locust Lake	December 18
Somerset	Laurel Hill Lake	December 11
Susquehanna	Quaker Lake	November 6
Tioga	Beechwood Lake	December 18
Tioga	Lake Hamilton	November 13
Union	Halfway Lake	November 6
Venango	Justus Lake	November 6
Warren	Chapman Lake	December 4
Washington	Canonsburg Lake	November 6
Washington	Dutch Fork Lake	November 6
Wayne	Long Pond	November 6
Wayne	Upper Woods Pond	November 6
Westmoreland	Donegal Lake	December 4
Westmoreland	Keystone Lake	December 4
Westmoreland	Twin Lake, Lower	December 4
Westmoreland	Twin Lake, Upper	December 4
Wyoming	Lake Winola	November 6
York	Hanover Water Company Dam	December 4

## Trout Stamp Art Rules

The Fish and Boat Commission is seeking wildlife artists to participate in the 1997 Trout/Salmon Stamp and Print competition by submitting a work featuring one of the Commonwealth's most scenic streams.

The juried contest is an annual event, with entries from artists throughout the United States. The winning entry will be depicted on the Commission's Trout/Salmon Stamp in 1997 and will be reproduced in several limited edition prints. Artists looking to compete for the 1997 title must depict one of a select group of streams.

The top entry will be featured on the stamp, required for all licensed trout anglers. The winning artist will receive up-front payments of \$3,000, as well as fees for signed prints, stamps

and mini-prints. The original work will become the property of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

The 1996 edition, which goes on sale December 1, 1995, introduces a new series of stamps featuring the state's world-famous trout streams. The first of series features Harvey's Creek in Luzerne County as depicted by artist Robert Kray. His 1994 brook trout was also the first winning entry by a Pennsylvania artist, so he became the first two-time winner in the contest's history.

For more information on the 1997 contest, including the official rules of entry, contact Timothy L. Klinger, Trout/Salmon Stamp Program Manager, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000, or call (717) 657-4537.



## Commission Seeks Public Input on Bass Season Restructuring

The Fish and Boat Commission is seeking input on a proposal that calls for a three-tiered bass season for inland waters and allowance for year-round bass angling in Lake Erie and Presque Isle Bay. At its fall quarterly meeting, held last October 22-23 in Pittsburgh, the Commission tentatively adopted the plan that would restructure the bass season by reducing winter and spring harvest beginning in 1997.

For waters managed under conventional bass regulations, the season would open the first Saturday after June 11 and extend through midnight October 31. During the regular season, six bass at least 12 inches in length may be creel. A reduced harvest or "trophy bass" season would begin November 1 and extend through February. During the reduced harvest period, a 16-inch minimum size/two-fish daily creel limit would be in place. The bass season would close March 1 and remain so until the subsequent season opener in mid-June.

Waters regulated under the state's Big Bass and Conservation Lakes programs would also follow the same dates for a three-tiered season schedule. In Big Bass waters, however, there would be a 15-inch minimum size/four bass daily creel limit during the regular season (mid-June through October) and a 16-inch minimum size/two bass daily creel limit during the reduced harvest period (November through February). In Conservation Lakes, a 15-inch minimum size/two bass daily creel limit would be in place during the regular season, with a 16-inch minimum size/two bass daily creel limit during the reduced harvest season.

Under the proposal, Lake Erie and Presque Isle Bay would be open for year-round bass fishing, with a 15-inch minimum size/four bass daily creel limit for most of the year. A 20-inch/one bass daily creel limit reduced harvest period would be established from the first Saturday after April 11 through midnight the Friday preceding the first Saturday after June 11. No fishing tournaments would be allowed during the reduced harvest period on Lake Erie and Presque Isle Bay.

The Commission is currently soliciting public input on the proposal. Interested anglers can share their opinions by writing to: Executive Director, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000. All comments will be reviewed before any action on final adoption is taken.

In other action at the Commission meeting:

- Proposed rulemaking was adopted mandating that children 12 years of age and younger shall wear an approved Type I, II, III or V personal flotation device (life jacket) aboard boats while underway or on open water while on a boat 20 feet or less in length and all canoes and kayaks. Public comment is being solicited before any action on final adoption is taken.

- Big Bass regulations were extended on the Susquehanna River, effective January 1, 1996. The new area to be regulated as part of the Big Bass program begins at the Dock Street Dam and extends upstream to the Fabridam at Sunbury. It also includes a portion of the Juniata River from the confluence with the Susquehanna to the Duncannon Bridge. Big Bass Waters restrict harvest to a 15-inch minimum size/four fish daily creel limit during the open season.

- A 1.6-mile stretch of Salt Lick Creek, Susquehanna County, was added to the Delayed-Harvest, Artificial-Lures-Only program, effective January 1, 1996. The section extends from the downstream boundary of State Game Lands 35 upstream to the bridge on T-638.

- Regulation language was clarified to note that Cascade and Mill creeks in Erie County are open to fishing during the fall except from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m.

- Proposed rulemaking was adopted establishing a 13.5-mile stretch of the Little Juniata River in Huntingdon and Blair counties, from the railroad bridge at the east end of Ironville downstream to the mouth, as a special regulations area with a 14-inch minimum size/two trout daily creel limit for the period from the opening of the regular trout season through Labor Day.

Public input on this proposal is welcome and will be reviewed before any action on final adoption is taken.

- Action was taken to close Shawnee Lake, Bedford County, to fishing during a lake drawdown during the winter.

- The proposed removal of Rock Hill Dam, Lancaster County, was approved and the Executive Director was authorized to move forward with the project. The removal of the Commission-owned dam will cost roughly \$100,000 and will be funded through the Chesapeake Bay Program.

Rock Hill Dam is the first major blockage on the Conestoga River. Breaching of the dam will further the American shad restoration effort in the Susquehanna River watershed.

- Dates and locations were set for Commission meetings in 1996: January 20-21

(Harrisburg), May 18-19 (State College), July 20-21 (Harrisburg) and October 19-20 (location to be announced.)

- The Commission accepted a petition from the Chapman Lake Cottagers' Association requesting special boating regulations on Chapman Lake, Lackawanna County. In accepting a petition, the Commission agrees to review the request and issue a report within 180 days.

- Regulations language was amended to clarify that those who are licensed to do so may carry firearms on Commission property.

- Authorization was given to enter into an agreement with the Catholic Diocese of Scranton for land acquisition along Ox-bow Lake, Wyoming County. The Diocese has offered to convey, at no cost, approximately three lake-front acres along with access to the site for the purpose of developing a handicapped fishing pier and a small parking lot.

- Authorization was given to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Corrections to reconvey approximately three acres of property for an additional buffer zone to a firing range located on the Camp Hill State Correctional Institute in Cumberland County.

- Authorization was given to dispose of 2.95 acres of land in Porter Township, Clinton County, at public sale and earmark the proceeds for acquisition of new lands that will benefit the public.

- Authorization was given to enter into a property rights exchange with Susquehanna Township, Dauphin County, to exchange unrestricted easements for ingress, egress and regress across township property in return for an unrestricted easement for recreation on Commission property.

- The Commission moved to enter into an agreement with the Borough of Monaca, Beaver County, for the development of a fishing and boating access to the Ohio River, using federal funds in an amount not to exceed \$150,000.

- The Commission endorsed the Fish and Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative "Teaming with Wildlife." The federal initiative would establish a secure funding program to conserve nongame fish and wildlife programs. Under the current proposal, Pennsylvania could receive up to \$13.4 million annually for nongame programs.

- The Commission moved to hold two public hearings on proposed tournament fishing regulations. One hearing will be in the Erie area and the other in Harrisburg. Dates and times will be announced later.—*Dan Tredinnick.*



## The Law and You

by Jeff Bridi

### What are specially regulated waters?

The Fish and Boat Commission has designated particular areas of some waters for specific types of fishing activity. The specially regulated areas provide two main benefits to anglers; they provide additional fishing opportunities and they provide the Commission with additional tools to better manage and protect the resource. Some areas protect an especially sensitive aquatic resource while others may be in place to protect the health of the public, a "Catch-and-Release" area, for example. Other areas are set aside for certain types of angling such as fly-fishing or to extend fishing opportunities for all anglers as in a "Delayed-Harvest" section.

The "special regulations" can be divided into two broad categories: Tackle restrictions and harvest restrictions. Tackle restrictions are most often placed on the type of lure that may be used. Some areas permit artificial lures only, which include manufactured lures or flies. Any type of natural baits is prohibited. More restrictive areas such as "Heritage Trout Angling" areas permit only flies or streamers. In areas with "no harvest" restrictions, barbless hooks must be used. Tackle restrictions may also be placed on gear; in "Heritage Trout Angling" or "Delayed-Harvest, Fly-Fishing-Only" areas the type of tackle is limited to fly rods only.

Harvest restrictions are placed on all specially regulated areas. They can involve the creel limit, size restrictions and seasons, or all three. Some areas allow no harvest at all and are managed for catch-and-release fishing only. Other areas use increased size limits and decreased creel limits in order to protect the population or to manage for harvest of only the largest fish. In areas designated as "Delayed Harvest," the season and creel limits are changed to extend fishing opportunities over a longer period.

Not all specially regulated waters are for trout management. For example, the "Big Bass" program affects the bass regulations on selected waters throughout the state. This special regulation uses an increased size limit and a reduced creel limit to manage smallmouth, largemouth and spotted bass more conservatively. Many counties have at least one "Big Bass" water for anglers who prefer to go after larger bass.

Anglers who are interested in fishing specially regulated areas should refer to their *Summary of Fishing Regulations and Laws* for a list of the water areas included in the various programs. Most anglers are within a short drive of some type of specially regulated area. Before fishing anglers should also refer to the specific regulations that apply to the area in which they are going to fish.

*Do you have questions on fishing regulations and laws? Send questions to Jeff Bridi, Assistant to the Director, Bureau of Law Enforcement, PA Fish & Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a reply.*

## Drawdown Precipitates Shawnee Lake's Closure

Shawnee Lake, Bedford County, has been closed to angling to protect the fishery there during a drawdown of the lake, according to the Fish and Boat Commission. The Commission, which is the sole state agency charged by law with managing fisheries and fishing, voted to institute the closure at its quarterly meeting last October in Pittsburgh.

Shawnee Lake is a 451-acre impoundment in Shawnee State Park. Over the years, Commission fisheries biologists have documented an overpopulation of slow-growing yellow perch and congestion by rooted aquatic vegetation in the lake. In an effort to improve conditions at Shawnee Lake, fall/winter drawdowns were recommended to reduce surface area, thus increasing predator-prey interaction and allowing winter freeze of rooted vegetation. Drawdowns were conducted over the winter in 1983-84, 1986-87, 1989-90 and 1992-93, producing the expected benefits and prompting a recommendation to continue the drawdowns on a regular three-year cycle. In addition to the usual reduction planned for this fall and winter, the 1995-96 drawdown will be increased and extended for a longer period than in past years so that State Park engineers may inspect and repair bridge piers.

Fish populations become concentrated during drawdowns. Commission and State Park personnel have also noted increased fishing pressure at Shawnee when the lake is lowered. To prevent excessive short-term harvest of quality sized fishes of all species, fishing will be prohibited while the lake is at drawdown levels. The lake has already been drawn down and will remain so into the spring of 1996.—Dan Tredinnick.



## Equipment Auction

On Saturday, April 27, 1996, the Fish & Boat Commission will hold an auction of used boats, motors, trailers, boating accessories and other maintenance equipment at Fort Indiantown Gap, Route 934, Lebanon County. A preview of the sale items will be held from 9 a.m. to noon. The auction begins at noon and will take place rain or shine.

The terms of the sale include full payment in cash or by personal check. No credit cards will be accepted. There is a 10 percent buyer's premium for all sales, and six percent sales tax will be collected. All sales are final.

A list of items to be auctioned will be available after February 1, 1996. To receive a list of items and a location map, please send requests with a business-sized self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Equipment Auction, PA Fish & Boat Commission, Bureau of Law Enforcement, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.



## 1996 Fishing License Available December 1

Sales of 1996 Pennsylvania fishing licenses begin December 1 at more than 1,700 issuing agents across the state, including most sporting goods stores, County Treasurers and Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Regional Offices. A valid license is required of persons age 16 and older to fish legally or angle for any species of fish. Licenses are valid from December 1 to December 31 of the following year. For more information or the location of the nearest issuing agents, readers may call the Commission at (717) 657-4534.

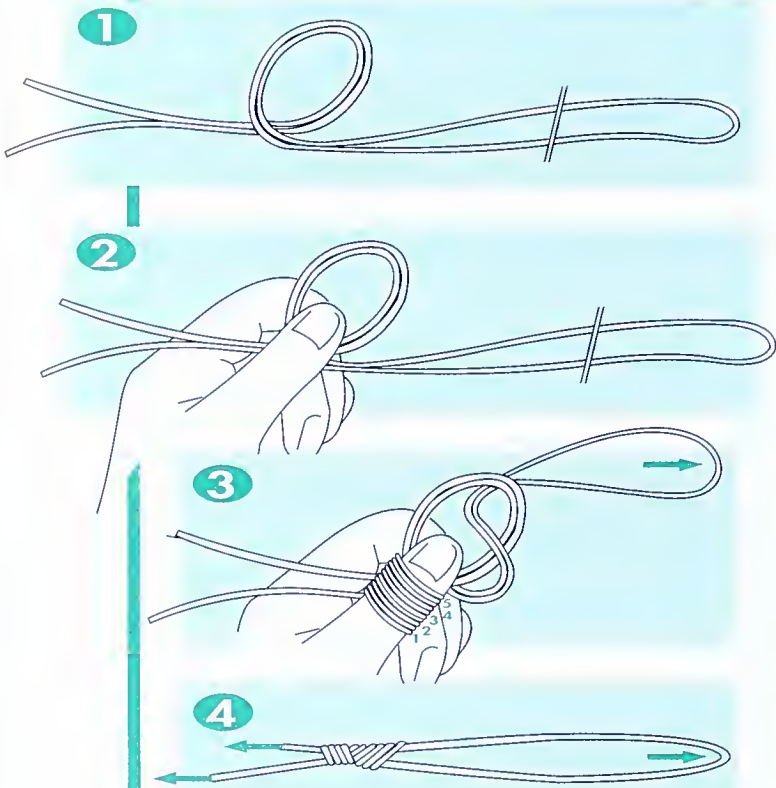
## Notice to Subscribers

Act 1982-88 provides that certain records of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission are not public records for purposes of the Right-to-Know Law. This means that the Commission can place appropriate conditions on the release of such records. The Commission makes the subscriber list for *Pennsylvania Angler* available to statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan fishing, boating and sportsmen's organizations for nonprofit, noncommercial organizational

purposes under limited circumstances.

If you do not want your name and address included on the subscriber mailing list to be made available to the described organizations, you must notify the Commission in writing before February 15, 1996. Send a postcard or letter stating, "Please exclude my name and address from *Pennsylvania Angler's* subscriber mailing list." Send these notifications to Eleanor Mutch, *PA Angler* Circulation, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.

## Angler's Notebook by Seth Cassell



With monofilament lines less than 30-pound test, a Spider hitch makes a strong, shock-resistant loop. A carefully tied Spider hitch is just as strong as the unknotted line. First, double the line and make a small loop, as shown. Then loop the line five times around your thumb. Pull slowly to tighten.

Crappies are fun and easy to catch, and they make fine meals. The problem for most anglers, however, is locating them. A good way to find them is to position your ice holes at set distances from the shore, and then working each hole until you find the fish. This allows you to cover different depths effectively and find a school of willing crappies.

When you aren't getting any strikes while trolling for walleyes, try limiting your efforts to one promising location. Walleyes can be quite finicky at times, and if you make several passes over one area, you may be able to entice them to strike. Also, if you are using a walleye spinner, try tipping it with a minnow or nightcrawler. This combination can also liven up your fishing trip.

Many fly-fishermen have the problem of getting a nail knot caught in the rod guides. A quick remedy to this problem is coating the nail knot with a small amount of Aquaseal. This makes the passage of the knot through the rod guides much smoother. Be sure, however, not to get the glue on your hands, because it can be very difficult to remove.

Check the electrical connections on your boat trailer. It's probably not too late this winter to scratch off any corrosion with a knife and coat the connections with petroleum jelly—a task you should include in your winterizing agenda. This prevents corrosion buildup and ensures solid connections.

Most fly-fishermen have had the problem of snagging a fly on a rock or log when fishing a productive hole. This can be a nuisance, because wading to retrieve your fly can send the trout darting to the next county. But before ruining your "honey hole," try roll casting toward the snag. The reverse pull that the roll cast provides can sometimes dislodge your fly.

Catfish can be difficult to handle at times, especially with their hazardous spines. One trick to calm an uncooperative catfish is to run your finger up its belly. It is said that this "tickles" the catfish, which causes them to be more relaxed and easier to handle. Try it and see if it works for you!

illustration- Ted Walke



The mission of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission is to provide fishing and boating opportunities through the protection and management of aquatic resources.

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# SMART

## Angler's Notebook

by Carl Richardson

### Steelhead

Is it a steelhead or is it a rainbow? Technically they are the same fish, with the scientific name *Oncorhynchus mykiss*. Native to the Pacific Northwest (Washington, Oregon and northern California), steelhead are anadromous. Rainbows are not. "Anadromous" means that they migrate from salt-water to freshwater to spawn.

In Pennsylvania, we call the rainbows that migrate from Lake Erie to the tributaries "steelhead." The first steelhead stocked in the early 1960s were from eggs collected from West Coast rivers. Now all the steelhead stocked in Erie come from eggs collected from Erie fish. We now have our own kind, or strain, of steelhead—fish adapted to living in Lake Erie and its tributaries. There are some Erie steelhead that spawn in the late fall/early winter and some that spawn in the spring.

In the fall and again in the spring, spawning steelhead are collected from several Lake Erie streams. These streams are called *nursery waters* and are closed to fishing. These adults provide the fertilized

eggs that are hatched and grown into smolts at three hatcheries—Fairview, Tionesta and Linesville. The adults are returned to the streams after eggs are collected and fertilized.

Most of the smolts are stocked in the spring. The Fish and Boat Commission and the 3-C-U cooperative nursery stock nearly one million smolt in Lake Erie streams. Smolts are usually less than 9 inches long, and become "imprinted" on that stream. This means they will return to that stream when they mature.

A few Lake Erie steelhead spawn successfully in the wild. This happens only in a few of the streams, such as Conneaut Creek. These waters stay cool in the summer and don't have problems with ice jams or ice floes. Ice jams shift the stream bottom, killing developing eggs and fry. Many streams just don't have the right type of habitat for spawning.

In late spring the smolts move to the lake where they cruise around in loose schools, eat baitfish and grow. By age 2, when most make their first trip into the streams, they are about 17 inches long.

Because steelhead don't die after spawning, they return to the lake and continue to grow. A three-year-old Erie steelhead is about 24 inches long. A four-year-old is around 28 inches. Studies show that nearly half of the steelhead caught in Lake Erie streams are released, giving them a chance to grow

and be caught again. **ANGLER**



Rainbow Trout

Steelhead Trout

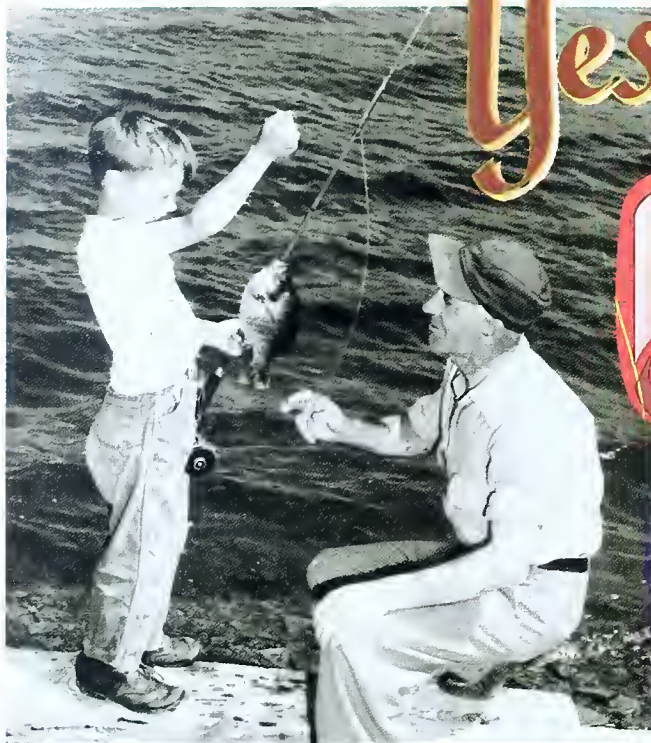
### STEELHEAD IDENTIFICATION

Faint pink or red stripe. Spawning males and females have bright-red or pink cheeks and gill flaps. Mouth is completely white. Pacific salmon have black gums, or tongues. Fish right out of the Lake are silver and sometimes called *chromers*. Once in the stream, fish turn dark olive to nearly black.

### STEELHEAD FISHING TIPS

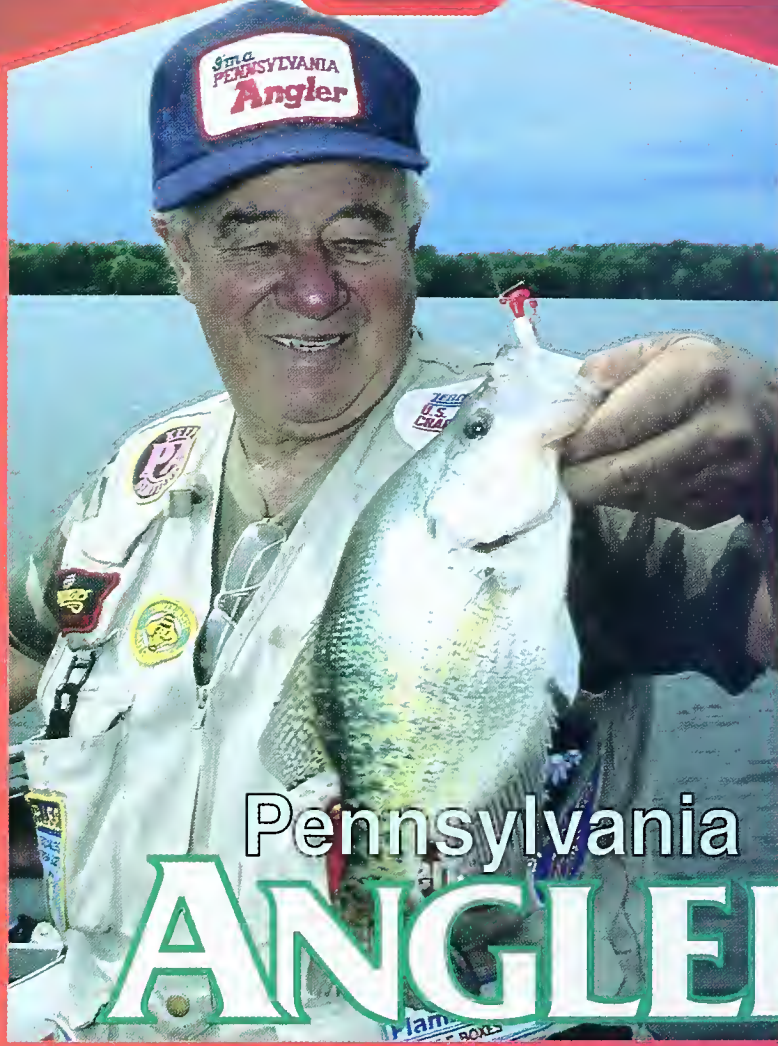
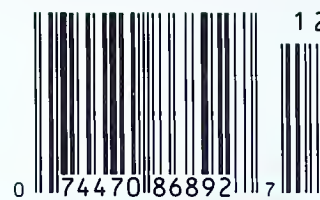
- Fishing is often best as water in streams rises or falls.
- Active fish moving up streams gather at the heads and tails of pools.
- Deep riffles are good places to fish salmon eggs or imitations.
- Low, clear water often calls for 2- to 4-pound-test line and hooks as small as you can go.
- In cold water, fish gather in slow, deep pools.
- Steelhead can be hard to spot in the water. Look for shadows and movement across the bottom.





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